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*Sport
in
New Zealand*



*Lieut. Colonel
Montagu Cradock*



Sport, New Zealand.

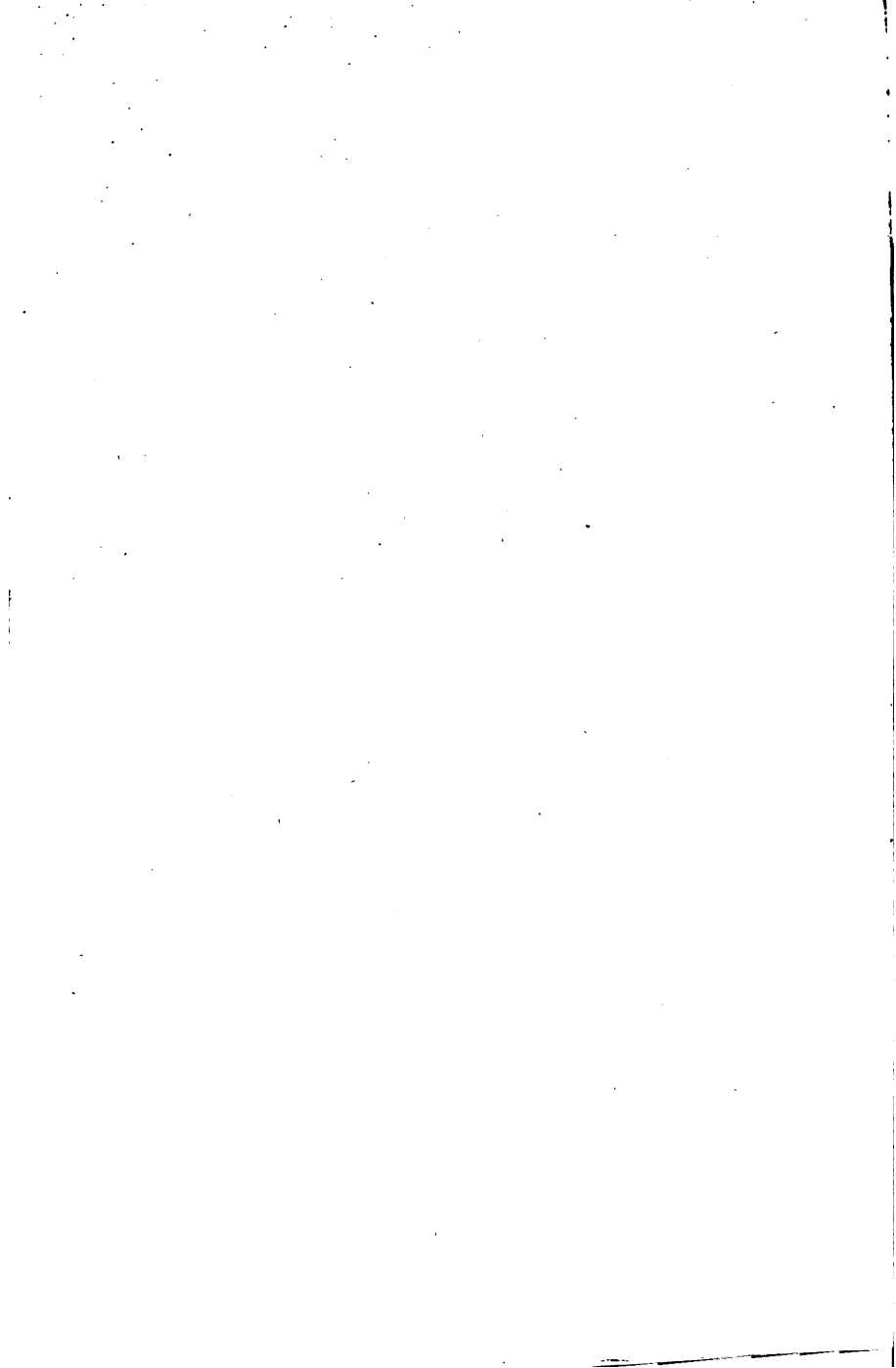


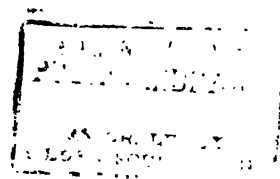
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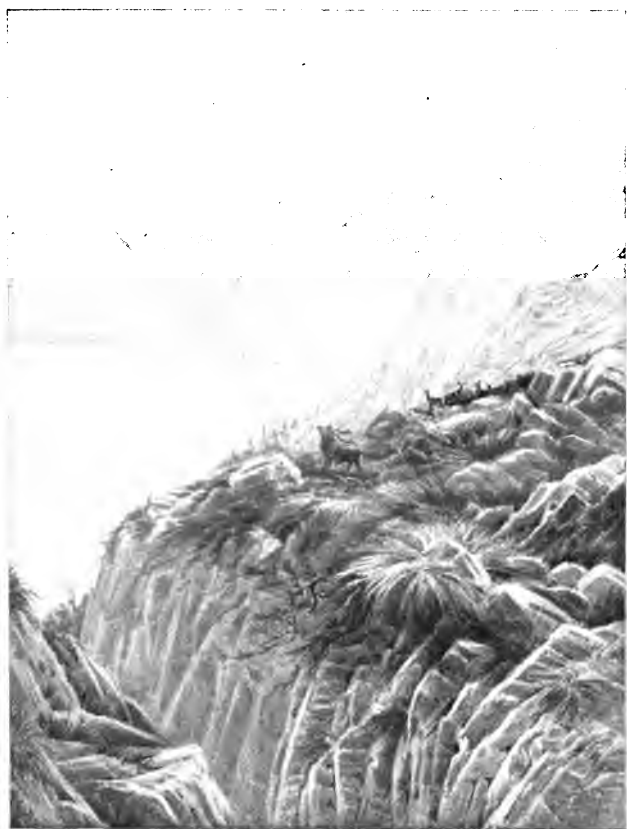
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Sport in New Zealand







Lake Hawea.

[*Frontispiece*]

Report in New Zealand

BY

COL. MONTAGU CRADOCK, C.B.

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN TREHERNE & CO., LTD

10, ABINGDON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1904

10000



Lake H. . .

Sport in New Zealand

BY

Lieut.-Col. MONTAGU CRADOCK, C.B.

ILLUSTRATED

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Preface

"O that mine enemy would write a book!"

R.M.S. "MOANA,"
PACIFIC OCEAN, *August* 1898.

DURING the vicissitudes of a chequered career, fate ordained that I should spend the last two years in New Zealand, and during that time an innate love of sport, although far removed from my occupation, compelled me to mentally note a good many features in connection with the flora and fauna of the colony, and unwittingly to record them on the tablets of my memory. A long sea voyage back to England has given me the inclination and ample opportunity to draw on these tablets, and to put down in bold black and white such observations as I can call to mind that may interest any stranger whose lines of life take him into those remote latitudes. So too any dweller in the land who has been up to now unable to climb the towering peaks of those glorious mountains where the red deer have their home, may be tempted by them to explore those regions, or to develop in other fields his embryonic sporting proclivities.

Wymock Aug 26/21

Though I have endeavoured to be impartial, I, as well as anyone else, can see in a moment, on reading through the book, that I have given undue preponderance to the delights of deer-stalking, so it is self-evident that in my opinion this is *the* sport of the country; but still I hope I have given every other branch its full share of notice, even if I have overstepped the limits in my eulogies on stalking.

My original object in jotting down these personal experiences, and collecting others from friends before sailing, did not soar to the pretensions of a book, but rather to a series of articles in some magazine. However, having collected a fair amount of material, I shall aspire to be an author.

I am much indebted to the various contributors who have favoured me with articles, and to Mr L. W. Wilson for the talented pictures he has made from my sketches, photographs of which form the main feature of my illustrations; and hoping that the colonial colloquialisms which I have used as much as possible will not render my meanings incomprehensible, I sign myself, with all due apologies for shortcomings,

MONTAGU CRADOCK.

NOTA BENE.—*The author could not publish this book until 1904 owing to the exigencies of the Boer War and other hindrances.*

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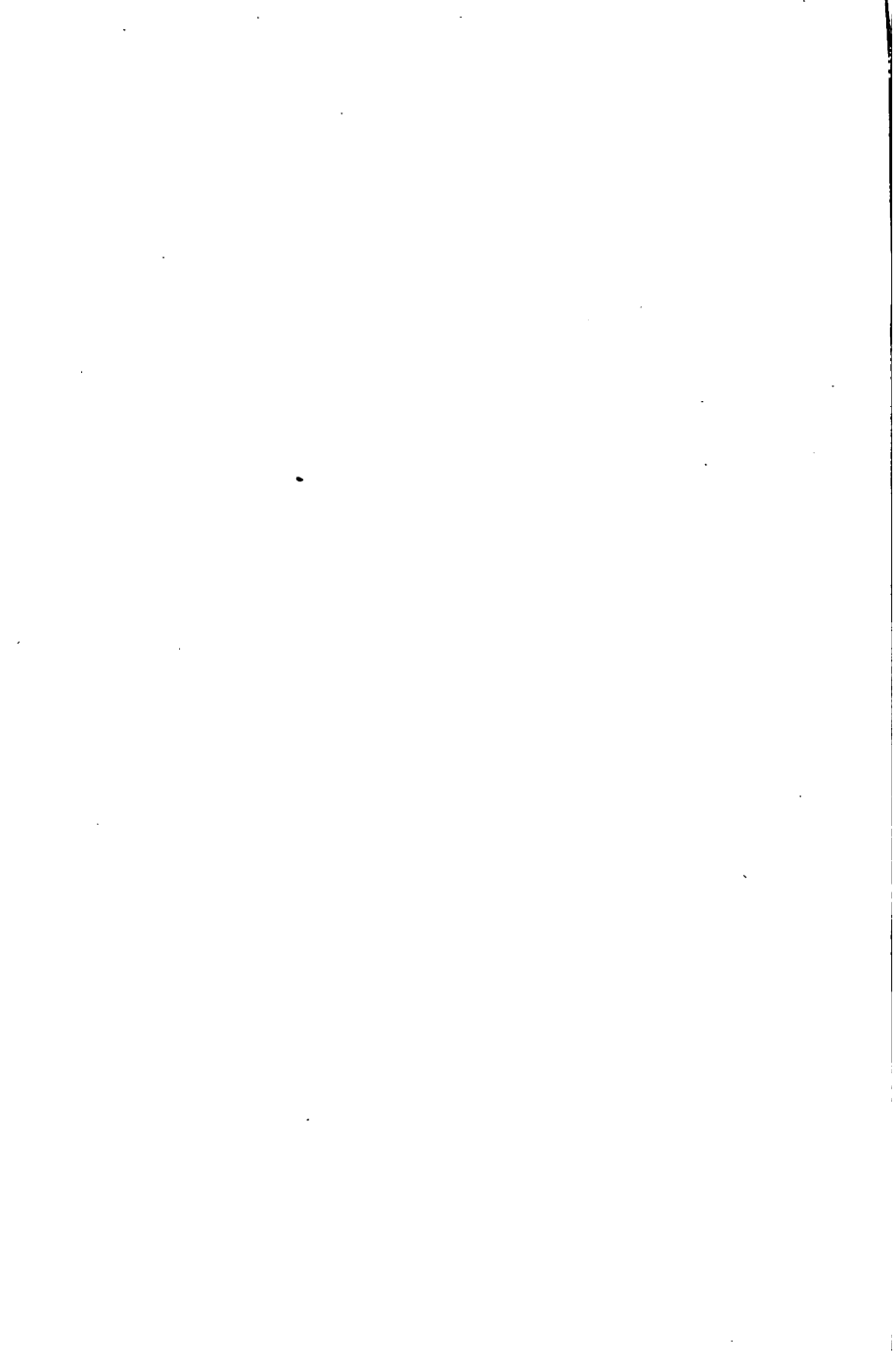
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Part I



Sport in New Zealand

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

FEW people in the Antipodes, let alone in England, realise the grand field for sport that exists in those far-distant latitudes 'neath the Southern Cross, and there are very few indeed who ever take advantage of it.

In New Zealand perhaps this is not so much to be wondered at, for nothing but bees have their abode in that healthy little colony—no drones or butterflies haunt its rugged mountains or smiling vales, and an idle man is a rarity seldom seen; the nearest approach to one being that lawful prey of hotel-keepers, the ever-inquisitive but harmless tourist.

And then again the tourists cannot be designated as idle, for the majority of them form a peculiar class of their own, whose one object in life is to see as much as they can possibly cram into the time they have set apart for their trip, and to expend all their energies in so doing; they travel about loaded up with sheaves of tickets and volumes of

guide-books, and they know to a nicety what they have to do every day, and every minute of that day, from the very moment they leave their native shore until they once more set foot on it.

If during their journeyings they find some part they like better than another, they have no time to stop and enjoy themselves there, for they must push on with feverish haste or their whole arrangements will be thrown out of gear.

Their motto truly is 'Excelsior,' and a proud man is he who, stepping on board his ship for the return voyage home, can slap his chest and say he has not only seen all that any of his fellow-passengers have seen, but also can 'go one better' and enlarge on some unique spot he alone has visited!

The Sounds and Mount Cook, Hot Lakes and Cold Lakes, all must have their turn, though the most transitory glimpse of each is sufficient as long as the itinerant 'tow row' can say *he has been there*.

If amongst these tourists there are any with sporting proclivities, they little know what excellent opportunities they might have of exploiting them in some of these regions if visited at the right time, and few countries have such natural facilities for affording sport as New Zealand, if unfortunate though well-meant legislation has not crippled it for ever; but I fear alas that it has done so in many instances, and more especially has it set its seal on any increase of game-birds, for by sanctioning that malicious course of importing pests to

destroy pests, it has established a hoard of vermin in the country that only long years of persistent persecution can possibly eradicate.

The imported rabbit was the original offender, and the harm and ruin he has brought about is almost incalculable ; but on his devoted head has been piled for many years not only all the damage he has done to good farmers and runholders, but also all the faults committed by the bad ones who have lived year after year on the principle of taking all they can out of their land and putting nothing back ; and no matter how much they have overstocked their pastures, or how exhausting the crops that they have taken out of the soil during all this time, they are surprised that it does not remain as fertile as it was in its original virgin state.

Granted that the rabbit is a most atrocious little marauder, and that he fouls as much ground as he eats, he nevertheless is not quite as black as he is painted. To a sportsman the greatest sin he is answerable for is the fact that so many worse than useless brutes have been imported to wage war against him—which said detestable vermin, stoats, weasels, and ferrets, have, instead of wiping the unfortunate coney off the face of the earth, first turned their attention to killing off all the curious and rare wingless and flightless birds that are indigenous to New Zealand, and then to becoming the most determined henroost robbers ever known, to say nothing of killing off every nesting partridge, pheasant, or quail that has been fortunate enough to

escape the various poisons that law, again stepping in, has ordered to be laid everywhere for rabbits.

However, this mischievous legislation has luckily not affected either deer-stalking or trout-fishing, and for these two branches of sport New Zealand can challenge comparison with any other country in the world. It stands unrivalled for both, and nowhere is sport set in more picturesque surroundings, or in more beautiful and diversified scenery.

Let us take a glance at some of the principal features of New Zealand sport, and perchance my humble efforts to roughly describe the resources of its glorious mountains, placid lakes, and tumbling rivers, may induce some energetic sportsmen from England to visit its storm-swept shores and investigate them for themselves. For one to whom a long sea voyage is ordered by some stern physician's mandate, or to whom time is little object, no pleasanter trip could be desired; and the rather prevalent idea that exists in many minds that the country is in no way connected with sport beyond that its inhabitants jump wire fences and bred Carbine, would speedily be eradicated.

I firmly believe a very large percentage of ordinary Englishmen look upon the colony as part of Australia, and that its chief feature of importance is that female franchise flourishes (?) there; and I am certain some even are under the impression that it is a country inhabited by niggers!—*vide* the invitation card sent to a certain important New Zealand statesman while in London for the 1897

Jubilee last year, by a distinguished hostess. On it was written, in addition to the ordinary invitation, a request that he would come to her function in his "native dress"!

But that sport can be had there, and very excellent sport too, is by no means a traveller's tale; and what has been done to produce material for it in a country that would otherwise be entirely destitute of it is wonderful. For the whole of this sport the only people to thank are the members of the different Acclimatisation Societies which have been established in various parts of the colony, who for many years have spent large sums of money in importing game-birds, salmon and trout ova, and when possible red and fallow deer.

Amongst the game-birds that have been imported into New Zealand are the following :—

English Pheasants.	Californian	Mountain
Chinese Pheasants.	Quail.	
English Partridges.	Australian Quail.	
English Mallard.	Australian Plovers.	
Pintail Grouse.	English Green Plovers	
Californian Quail.	(Peewits).	

In addition to these the following birds have also been imported :—

Guinea Fowl.	Bronze Winged Pigeons.
Pea Fowl.	Australian Laughing
Wonga Wonga Pigeons.	Jackass.

Australian Waxbills.	Blackbirds.
Australian Minahs.	Thrushes.
Australian Owls.	Hedge Sparrows.
Australian Landrails.	House Sparrows.
Civil Buntings.	Goldfinches.
Red Pales.	Greenfinches.
Java Doves.	Yellow-hammers.
Linnetts.	Robins.
Mountain Sparrows.	White Swans.
Chaffinches.	Black Swans.
Skylarks.	Rooks.
Starlings.	

Amongst animals are :—Red Deer, Fallow Deer, from Great Britain ; Axis Deer (or Cheetal), and Sambur, from India ; Kangaroos, Wallabies, and Opossums, from Australia.

Of the above list of birds those that have thriven most are the Californian quail, sparrows, skylarks, starlings, blackbirds and thrushes, goldfinches, and black swans.

The starlings probably of the whole lot have done most good to the country ; and the goldfinches and common sparrows have done most harm. The goldfinches are a perfect pest in some of the large fruit districts, and blackbirds and thrushes are almost as bad in the gardens in towns as they are in the home of their origin.

Rooks have not thriven, though I don't know why or wherefore ; but perhaps it is just as well, as they are such atrocious egg-suckers, and would

probably combine with the harriers to keep down game. I must confess to a sneaking regard for them all the same; and the joy I experienced when I heard the old familiar 'car,' 'car' above me in the trees round Government House at Auckland, was as great as if a very dear old friend had welcomed me. It was so unexpected too, as I had no idea a rook was within 12,000 miles of me.

Red deer and fallow deer have done well, and the latter have increased so much that they are becoming troublesome to the farmers in some districts; for when a herd of a couple of hundred of them go and 'camp' for the night in a turnip field, you can imagine what a lot of damage can be done by morning. However, their numbers are very easily reduced, and it is most improbable that they will ever give any real cause for complaint.

Wallabies are doing well, ditto the opossums.

The blame of importing the first rabbit is saddled on a private individual, who released a pair near Invercargill (which, by the way, is the most southern city under British suzerainty, as well as in the world), and from that pair has sprung the enormous stock which has now spread all over both islands. They must have travelled innumerable miles, and swum countless rivers; but the fact remains—there they are, now thoroughly established, and there they will remain in greater or lesser numbers, until the end of time.

Every means are taken to destroy them, and

Government appoint and pay large salaries to rabbit inspectors, whose sole business is to continually visit every portion of their individual districts, which are scattered over the whole of New Zealand, and enforce penalties with the greatest rigour on anyone who has too many rabbits on his property, or has neglected to carry out the poisoning and trapping regulations with sufficient zeal.

And keeping down the rabbits is no light task for the tenant, as it entails keeping up a staff of rabbiters continuously for that work alone, and their wages, in a country where wages rule so high, make a very material hole in the annual profits.

As it may interest my readers, I will quote the particulars that were given me by the manager of a large Land Company's stations, and I can vouch for the facts being actually correct, although the figures may appear almost fabulous.

This station I refer to is the K—— Station in Central Otago, which has an area of 206,695 acres, and on which they shear on an average 45,000 sheep per year.

Imagine $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres to carry one sheep!

Well, in one year (1892-93) no less than 503,546 rabbit skins were *paid for* on this estate; but as this does not, of course, include all the rabbits that were poisoned and not found, or had their skins destroyed by hawks or vermin, it is impossible to arrive at the numbers actually destroyed.

One hundred men were kept on all the year

round for nothing else, and they trapped all the summer, and poisoned with phosphorised oats all the winter.

They were paid no wages, but by results—namely, at the rate of 13s. per 100 skins.

So these half a million odd rabbits cost the management some £3272 to destroy.

In the way of return for this outlay, they sold the rabbit skins, after they had preserved them, for £2420 for exportation; but, nevertheless, the rabbit account for the year showed a debit balance of £1723!—and I ask what property in any country could stand an annual drain on its profits to that amount?

The manager tells me that these stringent measures have diminished the amount of rabbits on the run, but he still keeps 60 rabbiters continually at the work of destruction, and last year (1897) 316,853 skins were paid for.

These are big figures, and of course it is a fairly big station; but still it is not exceptional in either one case or the other, and by no means an isolated case.

As I mentioned before, the men to destroy rabbits on this particular station are taken on by contract, *i.e.*, at so much per 100 skins, a sum generally ranging from 10s. to 13s., according to the part of country and the severity of the climate; but on other stations they are regular wages men.

This was the case at the run where I stayed in the Wairarapa district this year, and where I had

some most excellent deer-stalking—an account of one day there being described in a chapter later on in this book.

There they had some twenty-eight men on, all the year round, at wages of something like 15s. per week and 'found.' To 'find' a man is calculated to cost about an average of 1s. per day, so even these men get wages that would appear high in England; and rabbiters are not the highest class of New Zealand workmen—in fact, as a rule, they are men who cannot keep steady at any other work, and are rather aptly called 'dead beats.'

Their rabbit cheques generally find their way to the nearest public-house, to be 'knocked down' as soon as received.

But a rabbit's life is not an easy one, though it may be a happy one. In winter especially it is a hard life, as they live most of the year round in tents, at a high elevation.

It is a curious sight to meet a rabbit and his attendant pack, which very often consists of 15 to 20 couples, all the most varminty lot of mongrels you can imagine. Every breed, size, and description of the dog world is represented, and one and all look fit to run for a kingdom.

Rabbiters' dogs in New Zealand, like sheep dogs in England, are not taxed.

You might wonder how so many animals are fed; but when I tell you that five or six sheep are very often killed per day at the homesteads on big runs for the men's meals alone, and that the station

hand is acknowledged everywhere to be the most wasteful of human beings, and nothing but the choicest parts of a sheep are considered fit for his pampered palate (for he throws everything else away), you can imagine that dog food is fairly plentiful; and of course in camp the rabbits that are killed will feed any number of dogs, as never do their free and easy masters reckon a rabbit to be of any value whatever except for the skin, and they just whip the skins off them as they take them out of the traps, and throw the carcasses down just where they are, and the pack soon makes short work of them.

Poisoned rabbits the same, only poisoners seldom have so many dogs as trappers. The poisoned carcase, curiously enough, hardly ever seems to affect a dog or hawk that may devour it—it is the phosphorised oat and pollard poisoning in its primary state that appears to do the mischief; and for the uninitiated I might here take the opportunity of describing the *modus operandi* of the poisoners, as, under the favourable circumstances that exist in New Zealand, trapping and poisoning have been reduced to quite a fine art. There are several sorts of poison that are used, the principal ones being phosphorised oats and pollard, and various patents, such as 'Toxa,' etc. They are always laid in the same manner, and their effects are all more or less similar,—phosphorised rabbits generally making for water, when they invariably hasten their death by drinking copiously and die close to it. Pollarded

rabbits are as a rule found on footpaths or pack tracks ; and Toxa claims the distinction of killing on the spot.

Which is best, I have not sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to authoritatively state, nor do I want to give any of the processes a gratuitous advertisement. Phosphorised oats are simply oats soaked in a preparation in which phosphorus is the principal ingredient. Pollard is a mixture something like dry porridge, and Toxa is for all the world like apple jelly. What their component parts are, I don't know : but they all have a strong element of phosphorus or strychnine running through them.

The poisoner either arms himself with a patent spade, or else with an ordinary ferreting spit and a tin of poison. The former is the quicker method, but the price of the patent spade rather militates against its chances with small squatters.

He then takes a line to work on, such as the side of an old fence, a long ridge of a hill, the bank of a water-race, or some such formation, and every few yards he simply cuts a sod and turns the turf over.

After turning the sod, he puts a small portion of his poison on to the newly exposed earth, and his task is done.

With the patent spade, as soon as he has turned the sod he pulls a spring on the handle of the spade, which releases the correct portion of poison out of a box, which is already fitted on to the spade, exactly

on to the proper place on the ground ; but if he carries out the old-fashioned method, he has to put down his spade and take the poison out of the tin and then place it, which needless to say is a longer process, as well as a more risky one from getting poison on to his fingers.

He has nothing further to do till next morning, when he goes his rounds and collects the slain.

Poisoning, as a rule, can only be carried on in the winter, as in spring and summer the rabbits have sufficient fresh grass to eat, and are not reduced to try experiments : but why a rabbit should want to sample so very uninviting a dish as a few crumbs of pollard, or to tackle food so foreign to his general diet, beats comprehension ; I suppose the fresh-turned soil attracts him in the same way that a new rabbit 'scrat' in the middle of one's croquet lawn attracts other rabbits, and compels them to still further enlarge and generally investigate the hole already made, so we can only put it down to the innate cussedness of the animal, and congratulate ourselves that they are apt to suffer rather severely for their inquisitiveness, in a country where poison is laid.

Of course a large number of rabbits go off into their holes to die, and then even their skins are lost.

It is a painful death, and personally I should even prefer to be trapped. A poisoned rabbit screams out as much as, if not more than, a trapped one when he has taken his dose, and then he

becomes paralysed, or has violent convulsions until he dies.

Trapping rabbits, goodness knows, is quite painful enough, and an advertisement of a rabbit in a trap that you see at all New Zealand railway stations—evidently taken from a photograph of the actual live rabbit in a trap—illustrates this fully, by the animal's agonised expression and wide-open mouth.

But we will hope no unnecessary cruelty is practised, and that cases of taking the rabbits out of the traps and keeping them alive with their shattered limbs until there is a better market for them, are few and far between. I certainly have *heard* of such cases, but of course that is only in parts of the country where the entire animal is wanted, and never occurs in parts where the skin is the only valuable asset.

I must here mention a good night's trapping, although I do not doubt many will say it is a yarn for the ear of the Marine Cavalry alone. I can, however, vouch for its accuracy, as I was on the spot, and I saw the whole proceeding. The facts are these: a man set 130 traps about five o'clock one evening, and next morning at daybreak he had caught 134 rabbits in them!

The explanation is simple enough when I tell you he visited his traps three times during the night: he caught nineteen on his first round, what he caught on his second round I forget, but when he had cleared his traps for the third time he had 134 full-grown rabbits hanging up.

During 1897 a new method was most successfully tried in many districts (especially in the South Island) for materially reducing the number of rabbits, and at the same time largely increasing the income of many a working-man. This was the 'freezing for exportation' process. It bids fair to altogether oust poisoning, and if this alone is effected, incalculable good will have been done to sport.

Whereas before this method was hit on, run-holders had to pay large wages to rabbiters, now there is an enormous supply of men who will clear your ground for nothing, and in some cases will even pay a penny or twopence a couple for the privilege of doing so! Rabbits during the winter months have only to be delivered at the nearest railway station to command a price of sixpence, sevenpence, and even eightpence a couple, and the rabbiters have absolutely no trouble or bother beyond catching and dumping the rabbits down at the station in good condition.

I have often watched the arrival and packing of a contingent of rabbits at some wayside station, where it has been my fate to have to wait for a train; and it is very interesting to see the process, and wonderful to think what strides the frozen rabbit trade has made in this its practically first year of existence.

The packer probably has a rough wooden shed erected close to the line, and outside of this has a truck-load of laths and battens all cut to certain sizes and carefully stacked. Between the arrivals of the

consignments, he busies himself knocking together these laths and battens into crates 24 inches long by 16 inches wide and 8 inches deep. Each of these crates will hold twenty-four rabbits.

A pack-horse, or spring-cart, or sometimes even a waggon, will arrive loaded up with rabbits, and its driver will just dump the whole lot down at the door of the hut, and count them in to the packer, who hangs them round on hooks as one would do in an English game-larder, to be immediately packed into these crates and despatched to the nearest freezing-works by the first train that passes through. When they arrive at the freezing-works, the crates are put into the refrigerating chambers just as they are for five or six days (rabbit fur is one of the best non-conductors, hence the reason so long a time is taken to freeze them thoroughly), and they are then transferred to the cold chambers of some outward-bound ship, for consumption in Manchester or Liverpool or other large manufacturing town.

The packer at the station where the rabbits are first delivered just scribbles with a bit of chalk on the wall, "May 20, Mick Moffitt, 173 couple," and Mick Moffitt, or whoever it may be, goes away quite contented, and with no other check to the score but his own memory, though with absolute trust that he will be paid in full at the end of the month.

Honesty of that sort is at a great premium in New Zealand, and it astonishes the stranger to see many instances of it that occur every day.

Rural post-offices, for example, are very often

simply tin biscuit-boxes laid on one side, with the opening to leeward of the prevalent wind, nailed on to the gate-post on the main road nearest to the sender's house.

If you take your horse out of your buggy, and leave the buggy on the roadside while you are away all day fishing, you never think of 'planting' your coats and rugs, but you just leave them in the trap, and no one has ever been known to lose anything on account of this sort of trustfulness.

One reason for this is that the genius 'tramp' is practically unknown in the colony. What nearest corresponds to him there, is known as a 'swagger,' or in Australia by the more picturesque name of 'sundowner.'

But a 'swagger' is never badly dressed or hungry, and he generally is a labourer temporarily out of work and looking for more, and you meet him whistling away, 'humping his swag,' which very likely consists of a tent, besides his blankets, and as happy as a sand-boy. And no wonder, for as soon as he gets tired he goes to the nearest house, and there they feel sort of honour bound to give him a good meal of mutton and tea, and allow him to 'doss down' in a barn or under a stack for the night, as comfortably as need be.

Such generosity possibly seems absurd, but it is an unwritten code belonging to New Zealand; and when you think that mutton is only twopence a pound in the most fashionable shops in a town, it minimises the charity considerably.

Yes, New Zealand is peculiar in this class of honesty, although I fear she is much like other auriferous countries when it comes to the point of stuffing a rubbishy mining property into the too-confiding British speculator, and she can breed as good a 'wild cat' as any of them.

But to return to the Acclimatisation Societies and the enormous benefits they have conferred on any unfortunate colonial who is fond of sport, and whose adopted country does not naturally provide opportunities for its enjoyment.

As I have said before, the importation of trout and red deer have been their main successes, though at one time their efforts promised to make New Zealand a magnificent partridge and pheasant country. Pheasants are still fairly numerous in the North Island; but, as you will see in my remarks on the subject later on in this book, they have had many enemies to contend with, and have not turned out the success they at first promised to be. I would not dream of saying a word against their introduction, as it is a most laudable and praiseworthy departure, but I contend that a game-bird that should be encouraged, even in a greater degree than either pheasant or partridge, is the snipe. He thrives in warm as well as cold climates, as instanced in India, which is infinitely hotter than the north of the North Island,—and Scotland, which is colder than the south of the South Island; and all over both islands are marshes and bogs that would make beau-ideal snipe ground.

Poachers would not think him worth a cartridge from a culinary point of view, even if they could hit him; neither could they net or snare him, and he would be immune from rabbit-poison.

The main difficulty with him would be his migratory habits; but such differences of climate as there are between Stewart Island and the North Cape, and the distance any other land is away, would probably persuade him into becoming a regular New Zealander. Snipe abound in Tasmania, the Chatham Islands, and the Auckland Islands,—why not, therefore, in New Zealand? They would be difficult to import, but it is not an insurmountable difficulty, and I sincerely trust the experiment will be tried, and if it proved a success at all it would be an incalculable one.

Whilst on the subject of the importation of strangers, I am glad to see that the Wellington and Otago Acclimatisation Societies are combining in their endeavours to import wapiti from America and chikhor from India. Both ought to do well, especially the wapiti; and the huge forests of bush on the west and south coast of the South Island very much resemble their native haunts.

The term 'bush' very likely gives an altogether erroneous impression to the stranger, so a word as to explanation may not come amiss here. 'Bush' in New Zealand is synonymous to 'forest' in most other countries, and generally consists of huge areas of magnificent forest trees ranging from forty to a hundred feet high. In parts these areas

cover hundreds of thousands of acres, and for miles and miles are even now totally unexplored.

One peculiarity of New Zealand is that, not counting importations, every tree on it is an evergreen. I do not know a more hopeless feeling than is experienced when you lose the blazed track in one of these large solitudes ; and unless the very greatest care is exercised you are utterly lost in a moment, and the evergreen trees hiding the sun from you makes your confusion still more distracting. Many a man well skilled in woodman craft has ' had to give it best,' and as like as not wander for days and days before striking some watercourse or other recognised sign which has enabled him to extricate himself ; ay, and many a skeleton is now lying bleached and buried in the luxurious moss and fern, possibly within a few hundred yards of the edge of the bush, to have reached which would have meant salvation.

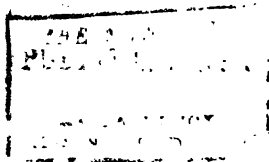
It is curious how extraordinarily tame the parrots, pigeons, and flightless birds are as soon as you penetrate into one of these dense bushes—they have no fear whatever of man, and simply regard him as a curiosity. The small birds—New Zealand robins and fantails, for instance—will actually perch on you if you keep perfectly still ; and it is very comical to see the robin—which, by the way, is almost exactly like our British robin, except that he wears a white waistcoat instead of a red one—put out a wax match.

The trick invariably comes off. Just light a match



Camp in the Open Bush.

[To face p. 20.



and put it down near you and stand still, and the robin, which is almost certain to be near you, will invariably fly down to it and put it out with his beak, or fly away with it. He is a delightful little bird, and his little bold black eyes twinkle every bit as brightly as his British compatriot's. If you chirp with your mouth in the same way that you persuade a weasel to look out of a stone wall into which you have seen him run, the little fan-tail gets most desperately excited, and, after flying close round you a minute or so, will just light on your head or shoulder for a moment, and then dart off again, to return directly to continue the process.

But I've got rather off the line, so must cast back, though before doing so I may mention that 'scrub' is the term used for what in other countries might be termed 'bush,' viz., scrubby stunted bushes from one to eight feet high, and generally composed of manuka or ti-tree (pronounced tea-tree). It is very common over the whole colony.

The Acclimatisation Societies have not confined their attentions to the importation of foreign birds and beasts alone, but are doing all they can to preserve the few birds that are indigenous to the colony, which, without their fostering care, would speedily become altogether extinct.

After considerable pressure had been brought to bear on the subject by this excellent society, the Crown, some three or four years ago, very wisely decided to set apart certain tracts of land to become sanctuaries for wild animals, and with this object

segregated a tract of Crown land in the middle of the celebrated West Coast Sounds, called Resolution Island, and purchased from the Maoris another Island called Little Barrier, off the north-east coast.

On each of these islands they appointed resident curators, and built them a house apiece, and also made arrangements that steamers should call at specified times to see if anything was required. These curators have the whole islands absolutely to themselves!

A more solitary life for anyone could not be imagined, as any expeditions inland are almost entirely vetoed by the dense bush, and the only means of transit is by boat.

Still, there must be something very seductive dwelling alone in the midst of so intense a solitude, where your only companions are rare wild birds and harmless animals, who from having no knowledge of human beings have no fear of them; and given good health and an enthusiast's love for natural history, many a man might have a worse billet.

Each curator has now got an assistant to help him, though I believe neither of them at present has wife or family with him; and their sole occupation is capturing on the mainland and carrying over to their island sanctuaries all sorts and kinds of the wingless and flightless birds that are indigenous to New Zealand, but whose ranks the advent of the hostile forces composed of ferrets, stoats, and weasels is rapidly diminishing.

The weather on Resolution Island is the great drawback, as even in the summer it is deluged by rain, and a rainfall of thirty inches in a month is by no means uncommon.

The curator, however, says that when it is fine it is the most lovely climate in the world.

The wet weather and dense bush are not at all favourable for English game-birds, nor for deer; and the protectionary measures are not so much conducive to sport as to preserving birds that would otherwise very shortly become extinct.

The curator at Resolution, in the three years he has been there, has transferred over 500 wingless birds from the mainland to his island, where they soon become as tame as barn-door fowls, and many of them eat out of his hand.

He tried geese, with the idea of allowing them to become wild, but he says he cannot induce them to leave the precincts of the house; and when he was away, two geese he had on an adjoining island perished from thirst, as they dared not face the unknown terrors of the bush to go to the water, though it was only a couple of hundred yards off.

He also tried goats, with the idea of establishing tracks that might be useful anon if red deer were turned down; but at present they are not a success, and he has decided not to turn down any more until he has got a certain amount of bush cleared and burnt.

In Little Barrier Island they have some rarer birds than on Resolution, the stitch bird for instance,

which is said to be extinct everywhere else in the world ; but there are also some disagreeable legacies left behind by the Maories, who lived there till quite lately, viz., dogs and cats and pigs ; however, these are very rapidly being destroyed.

Bell-birds and white-heads, robins, tuis, parakeets, etc., are all very common amongst the flying varieties ; as also are kiwis, Maori-hens, and kakapos, amongst the wingless and flightless species.

Opossums were turned out on Resolution Island, and are increasing.

So let us hope that although no very prominent results have accrued up to the present by the experiment, the movement will be continued, as it is certainly a step in the right direction ; and in time, no doubt, the thin edge of the wedge that has been thus introduced will widen out, and much larger tracts of land will be isolated for the very laudable object of increasing the stock of innoxious wild animals and game-birds, which will eventually all tend to make New Zealand take that forward place in the sporting world that her natural facilities, the configuration of her country, and her climate entitle her to assume.

Here it would not be out of place to enumerate some of the indigenous birds most commonly met with, but I will not attempt to give a complete list of them.

We will take first of all the 'kiwi,' as he is the bird that is invariably the first mentioned

amongst the ornithology of New Zealand. He is the only actual wingless bird, and there are no fewer than seven species of this tribe, ranging from a bird the size of an elongated Plymouth rock pullet, on a pair of very muscular under-standings, which is found in Stewart Island, to a bird one quarter the size, that is found in the north of the North Island. He is still fairly plentiful in the unexplored bush in the south and south-west above Preservation Inlet, and a man in my employ, who had just returned from 'prospecting' in that part, told me they formed the staple food of his daily meals, and tasted "same like beef." He is named after his peculiar note, and is one of the few birds that has not had his original Maori name Anglicised. He has a mottled grey or brown plumage, has a long bill like a wimbrel, and the hen lays an egg nearly as big as herself.

The 'weka,' Maori-hen or wood-hen, although he does not and cannot fly, has wings. They look immature and undeveloped, it is true, but still they are, without any question, wings. He is much more common than the kiwi; in fact, they are still very numerous in places, and you have only to camp anywhere near bush to have two or three constantly about and *in* your tent. Your pillow appears to have an extraordinary attraction for them, and it is always advisable to put it underneath some cover. There are also seven species of them; and though I have never eaten one myself, report says they

are not bad. His colour is very similar to a corn-crake, and his appearance rather like a hen pheasant.

The only other flightless land-bird is the 'kakapo' or night parrot, a weird animal like a very big green parrot, who only appears at night, and hops about taking his food from the ground.

Besides these birds that you might designate as having "not learnt to fly," New Zealand has nothing peculiar in bird-life, and is not blessed with a large number or a varied assortment of either songsters or silent birds. Certainly there are two brilliant exceptions—the 'tui' or parson bird, and the 'mako-mako' or bell bird. The tui has a most delightful voice—a soft mellow Trebelli sort of contralto; and the way he sings his little ditty, which much resembles the first bars of "Willie, we have missed you," to be followed in another key by a throat note that a nightingale might envy, is a treat to hear. He is like a large blackbird, and has a white ruff round the under part of his throat like a parson's choker, hence his English name. He always selects the topmost branch of a tree to sing his song, like an English thrush.

The mako-mako is a green bird little bigger than a linnet, and he also is blessed with a most melodious voice, and he is a great mimic. Luckily, his chief efforts in mimicry have been to master the tui's song, and he has succeeded fairly well, though he alters and lengthens

the song, and does not attempt the last throat note.

These two birds are the prima-donnas in the woodland choir of the back blocks where the imported birds have not yet reached; and the chorus is made up with the chirpings and twitterings of numberless fantails, robins, fly-catchers, and canaries (brown with yellow heads and breasts), the shriller cries of the parakeets, and the inevitable man who sings out of tune in the shape of the 'kaka,' which is a brown parrot with a strong and strident voice. The bashful young lady who does no more than coo and look pretty, is represented by the native wood-pigeon, and a truly beautiful bird it is—larger than the English wood-pigeon and more metallic in its tints, and so tame that it will sit on a branch and allow any number of shots to be fired at it or its neighbours in the same tree before flying away. It is quite a harmless bird, and I am glad to see that Government are waking up to the fact that unless it is protected by law it will very soon be completely wiped out.

Another beautiful bird that is almost extinct is the 'huia' or mountain starling, but his disappearance is due to the fact that no Maori considers himself presentable in society unless he has a huia feather in his hat or cap. You seldom see a Maori without one of these feathers, though the supply is getting very limited, as demonstrated by these feathers being often imitated in paper.

Then there is a New Zealand skylark, but he is rather a fraud, and is more like a water-wagtail in his habits than a lark. He hops about on the ground generally in the vicinity of roads, and *never* soars. He is your usual guest at lunch when out fishing, but beyond being very tame there are no points about him worth mentioning.

Of birds of prey there are not many. The 'marsh harrier,' however, is universal all over both islands, and at one time was strictly preserved on account of the idea that he would help to destroy the rabbits. His help has since been found out to be of little or no use, and is more than counteracted by the harm he does to chickens and young game-birds, so the restrictions on him are now withdrawn. He is a great carrion feeder, but a poor sort of bird at best, and certainly does not deserve encouragement.

There are only two other species of the hawk tribe, viz., two small falcons, which are often erroneously called sparrow-hawks or quail-hawks. They kill small birds, but being very tame and inquisitive are very nice to see flying about your camp.

The ordinary black-backed sea-gull does more harm than anything, and is a terror on weak and newly-born lambs.

There is also the mountain parrot, called 'kea.' He does an immense amount of harm, as he not many years ago got a taste for mutton into his mouth, and now any run-holder will give half a

crown a head for them. He prefers his mutton warm also, and his habit is to swoop down on to the back of some unfortunate sheep and bury his long overlapping hawk-like bill far down into the poor wretch's back, in an attempt to reach his kidneys. He does not content himself with one sheep, but will mutilate several, who all invariably die; and often, when deer-stalking in the far-away blocks, I have come across several all lying dead within a few yards of each other, and each with the same tell-tale mark in his wool.

Curiously enough, they are very tame, and it is quite possible to knock one over with a stick, as they follow you about and sit on stones quite close to you, never moving until you are actually within reach of them. Their shrill 'kea,' 'kea' cry often disturbs a stag when you are stalking him and they catch sight of you. If you kill a kea and wave it about, every other kea in the country will congregate round you making the welkin ring with their 'kea,' 'kea,' and with a gun you have no difficulty in killing the whole lot. A red handkerchief waved round your head has almost as good a result. One blessing is, they live only very high up in the mountains, and are seldom seen lower than 3000 feet.

Ducks and pukeko I propose to deal with under the chapter devoted later on to them.

Bitterns are numerous, and there are several small rails besides the pukeko.

Shore birds are plentiful, especially in the extreme

south, and the islands south of New Zealand fairly swarm with albatross, king-penguins, Cape-hens, and all the noblest of marine birds, who always nest on them. On the shores of New Zealand itself, the kuaka or godwit is the only bird who gives any sport, excepting, of course, wild ducks.

It is well worth anyone's while to make a trip round the islands where the albatross, etc., build—the Aucklands, the Antipodes, and the Campbell Islands, or the still more inaccessible Macquaries. He should be a good sailor, as in those wild, stormy southern latitudes below the 50th degree the sea is almost always very rough and the weather bitterly cold. For a dweller in the northern hemisphere, it seems incongruous to talk about the stormy south and the balmy north, or to choose a house with a northern aspect in preference to a southern; but when you have been south of the line a short time, you get quite accustomed to passing the bottle the opposite way to what you do in England, and to find the sun due north at noon.

Any number of albatross both of the 'royal,' 'wandering,' and 'sooty' (commonly called Cape-hen) species are seen on every coasting trip you take in New Zealand, and one never gets tired of watching these magnificent birds following the ship, and quartering the sea in its wake like highly-trained setters, and doing it all so easily, without even moving their immense wings, whilst every now and again they stoop at some flotsam thrown out from the galley, which, if they find it palatable,

they settle in the water to devour, and as soon as finished they make up the way with as little effort as a swallow skims past your carriage.

This latter bird, the swallow, has unfortunately not yet found his way to the colony, nor have any of the martin tribe.

Whilst in New Zealand myself, I sent a friend of mine the skin of a royal albatross that I secured, and my friend had him set up as if flying—from tip to tip of his wings measuring just 14 feet ; and there are even larger specimens than he is.

And now I think I have mentioned all the birds likely to be met with in ordinary life, so I must return to the heading of my book.

By a cleverly arranged dispensation of Providence, a man's taste differs as much in his idea of the choicest form of sport as it does in his opinion of the fairest of the fair sex, and it is difficult in consequence to know which particular variety of New Zealand sport to put into the pride of place ; but I suppose it lies between red deer stalking and trout-fishing, and in my humble opinion their rival merits rank in the order I have written them.

Certainly deer-stalking is only for the few, as spare time and expense are very prime factors in its pursuit, whilst trout-fishing is well within the reach of everyone, and neither of the above drawbacks need be taken into consideration with it.

But the former sport surely takes precedence when you think of all the difficulties to be surmounted in procuring a worthy trophy,—the camp-

life amidst the wild surroundings of a more or less inaccessible part of the country, the pure and placid grandeur of the mountains swelling one over the other until the snowy points of the highest seem to touch the very sky—the delightful ‘monarch of all I survey’ sort of feeling in those lofty solitudes, and the intensely self-satisfied content you experience when you sit and watch your gillie perform the last obsequies on a noble beast that has probably cost you hours of patient toil to approach, with all the attendant hopes and fears of a laborious stalk, culminating in that successful shot which, although you say nothing about it, you inwardly flatter yourself was a remarkably good one, and one that you hope will send you to the very top of the tree in your gillie’s estimation. All this makes up a scene in one’s daily life that it is hard to realise without actually participating in it, and which will ever remain as a bright spot to look back to in after years, more especially if your memory is occasionally refreshed by an upward glance at the wall, where the antlered monarch looks down on you from amongst all the other spoils of foreign lands.

Trout-fishing is a more placid sport, though its very placidity has an especial charm of its own, and there is no trouble attached to it in making elaborate preparations beforehand, nor is there any difficulty in getting rapidly on to your ground, and you have more or less comfortable hotels to stay in, and no petty anxiety about food, dry clothes, etc.



[To face p. 32.]



In camp-life you always hope to get a dry pitch when changing camps, but as often as not, although you perhaps may get a fine day for shifting camp, the night previous has been wet, and your tents are saturated, and are so heavy in consequence that they overload the pack-horses that had carried them with the greatest ease when dry, and at best you have only a cold clammy tent to get into after all. All these troubles you avoid when trout-fishing.

Sometime during your fishing expeditions I hope it will be your luck to be put up at a homestead on a big sheep-run; and if you manage to strike it during the shearing season, you may consider yourself specially lucky, although the manager will be unable to spare a moment to entertain you. But it is an experience you will never forget, and always look back to. If for nothing else, you will afterwards read Gordon's and Paterson's poems with much more zest when you have learnt the meaning of many words used in the wool-shed, that previously have been double Dutch to you, and have actually seen the shearers at work, and heard them "rise up, William Riley"—

"But you found the bush was dismal and a land of no delight:

Did you chance to hear a chorus in the shearer's hut at night?

Did they 'rise up, William Riley' by the camp-fire's cheery blaze?

Did they rise him as we rose him in the good old droving days?"

You will find out that the man who shears most sheep is the 'ringer' for the year, and that shearing a hundred great struggling wethers, with wool tangled and full of grass and sand, in a day is no child's play, and well worth the sovereign this feat commands.

"The 'ringer' that shorn a hundred as they never were
shorn before,
And the novice who, toiling bravely, had tommyhawked
half a score."

It's the old ewes that the shearers like, and to continue quoting Paterson, I must add this verse :

"But the shearers knew they'd made a cheque
When they came to deal with the station ewes ;
They were bare of belly and bare of neck,
With a fleece as light as a kangaroo's.
'We will show the boss how a clear blade shines
When we reach those ewes,' said the two Devines."

What the record is in the number of sheep shorn in one day I don't know, but 120 and 130 is by no means an unusual tally for one man, and with machinery of course this tally is enormously increased. And, mind you, the day is all laid out in regular periods, and a man cannot commence to shear when he likes, or go on as long as he likes. Every man is started at the same time, whether it be for the meal periods, the 'Smoke oh!' spells, or the wind-up of the day's proceedings, and they are also all stopped work at exactly the same moment.

Yes, a visit to a homestead during shearing time is a most interesting experience, and I strongly

recommend anyone who gets the chance of indulging in it not to miss the opportunity.

Both deer-stalking and trout-fishing have their drawbacks as well as their delights, and what sport would not become monotonous if it was always 'couleur de rose'? Weather of course affects both, but if we can stalk without fogs and fish without floods, we need not complain, as all its other tantrums are surmountable.

In addition to these two principal varieties of New Zealand sport, a host of others crop up in my mind, and it will be simpler to just roughly tabulate all the various phases of venery and chase in different sets, and discuss them one after the other in their order, and then proceed (in Part II.) to give my readers a few experiences of actual facts in which my friends or myself have personally participated.

CHAPTER II

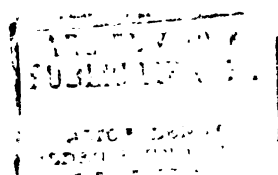
STALKING

RED DEER

THE various Acclimatisation Societies can never receive enough praise for introducing red deer into New Zealand. They thrive wonderfully, do no harm to anyone, and afford as good sport as man could wish for.

They have been put down in several different parts of both North and South Island, and everywhere have they done well, increased in numbers, and spread over a large tract of country. I suppose that at the present day the Morven hills and mountains about Lake Hawea in central Otago, the Wairarapa district round the Wairarapa Lake and across to the east coast, and all the country south and south-east of Nelson, are the principal forests; but deer are also fairly numerous in Hawke's Bay district, and doubtless before many years will be as numerous there as anywhere. Canterbury also imported some deer last year.

For the relative merits of the three chief forests—Hawea, Wairarapa and Nelson—it is not my business to discuss at any length; they are all





Rocky Point, Lake Hawea.

[To face p. 37.]

different, and each has its own individual advantages and disadvantages ; but I will just take the three principal forests, and record a few of their *pros* and *cons*.

For 'cons.'—*Hawea* is difficult of access. The ground is very precipitous and rocky, and to shoot there is the most expensive of the three forests, and a man must be fairly active to get over the ground.

Wairarapa is rather spoilt by the number of sheep and cattle (which are much more bothering than the sheep), amongst which the deer live with perfect amity, and it lacks the wild surroundings of an ideal deer-forest, owing to so much grazing land and bush, and no hill higher than a few hundred feet.

Nelson is too easy of access, and genuine sport is a good deal interfered with by the number of shooters (the majority, I fear, without a licence) who frequent it, the amount of bush, and allowing dogs to be used to assist the sportsman.

For 'pros.'—*Hawea* has its magnificent views, its exhilarating atmosphere—a scope that every year will increase—and all the wild surroundings that make it one of the most perfect deer-forests in the world.

Wairarapa has the comforts of a house instead of a tent to start from, the advantages of being able to ride to nearly all your ground, and more stags with good heads than the other forests.

Nelson has probably more deer on the ground than either of the others, supplies the excitement

of a 'honk' or drive, for those who prefer it to the more legitimate and orthodox stalk, and is very close to Nelson itself, which 'pro' you will observe I quote also as a 'con.'

Which of the three the sportsman decides on visiting depends very much on circumstances and what local celebrity he can command on his behalf to put him up to the ropes.

The Secretaries of all the Acclimatisation Societies are very obliging and willing to help a stranger in every way in their power; and even if he knows a local celebrity, I strongly recommend anyone wishing to stalk in any particular part to write beforehand to the secretary of the Acclimatisation Society in which the district lies.

The moot question of 'bore of rifle' I leave alone, as everyone has his own idea about them. Personally I prefer a double 303 express, as it is fairly light, very handy, and it is not at the muzzle end that any fault lies when an animal fired at does not drop. You can at a pinch also shoot rabbits with it round your camp if you run out of food, either on account of being snowed up yourself, or because you become inaccessible to pack-horses from the outside world on account of snow. This latter course should only be resorted to when in the most dire straits, as needless to say it disturbs your ground terribly, and means an hour or two extra every morning before reaching ground where there's any possible chance of finding a stag.

Talking about disturbing your camp, rather an

amusing experience occurred to me this season. As I was changing camps I met another party going to stalk, consisting of a shooter with his son, a boy of some twelve or fourteen summers, and their gillie. I came across them again a few days later, and on asking them about their sport, Mr — said he had done fairly well, but he was surprised to find how suddenly the beasts had ceased roaring. The first night he could hardly sleep for the stags near his tent at night, but since that night he had not heard a solitary roar.

I confess I had not noticed that they had stopped myself; but in course of conversation I asked him what his boy did when he was out stalking, and he replied, "Oh, he's right enough; he stays in camp and shoots rabbits and practises with his cornet"! *Verbum sap.*; and no wonder the stags had retired out of hearing distance!

It's astonishing what a distance you can hear even your camp cook chopping wood, and that necessary occupation should always be done in the middle of the day when the deer are settled, and if possible in a hollow. I have heard wood-chopping in a fellow-stalker's camp on a hill three miles distant that it would take at least a whole day to reach, and needless to say how these strange sounds must drive deer off when they are on the move.

But enough of deer-stalking; suffice to say that the general impression that it is almost an impossibility for a stranger to get good red deer stalking in New Zealand is a mistake. All he has to do

if he has a month at his command in the stalking season, is to write some time beforehand to the secretary of the Acclimatisation Society in charge of one or other of the deer districts, telling him of his intentions, and asking him to secure him a good gillie, and the remainder of his proceedings are easy enough.

In the Wairarapa, permission has to be obtained from estate owners for the *best* of the stalking, but they are extraordinarily generous with their permission, as long as they are sure the stranger is a good sportsman ; and I shall never forget the civility and profuse hospitality I received the only time I was able to treat myself to a shoot in that district.

A stranger should be at the base of his operations a few days before starting for his shoot, unless he enlist someone who lives there to equip him with tents, stores, etc., in which case he can go straight up without waste of time.

For camp life in New Zealand the following hints may prove useful to anyone proposing to visit any of the stalking districts, and though possibly the variety of 'tucker' to be taken may appear limited, you will find more than I lay down only becomes a nuisance to you, as you don't feel at all inclined for delicacies when in such hard training, and very often you only eat them because you are sort of morally bound to as you have them with you.

The *tent* is of course the main feature, and an

ordinary 8 by 10 feet is far and away the best, as it is amply big enough for two to sleep in, and it is not too big to 'pack' over rough ground. These tents can be bought anywhere in New Zealand, as they are largely in use in all mining districts, as well as in musterers' camps.

Of course two will be wanted—one for the shooters and the other for the men. No ridge or tent poles or tent pegs are necessary, as these are all procurable on the ground, and you are bound to camp near the bush for fuel, where any number are easily obtained. I strongly recommend any would-be camper-out to have a couple of strong waterproof canvas bags made, to carry his kit and blankets in. The best size is 4 feet long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot in diameter, made so that they will lace up tight and prevent rain percolating in when they are full. They are invaluable if you have to depend on pack-horses for means of transit, and they are always handy to stuff things into in a hurry, or to preserve your blankets or kit from blow-flies, which are very troublesome in the Hawea forest, or if necessary to sleep on and make an extra precaution when the ground is wet. A camp bed is no use whatever, and if you take one you are certain to revert to the custom of the country before you've been out a couple of nights. This custom is to lay two logs parallel to one another, and fill up all the space in between to the depth of two or even three feet with the 'feathers' of birch trees or manuka

scrub. The feathers are simply the extreme points and twigs of the branches, some two or three inches long, all laid the same way, and they form the softest and most comfortable mattress imaginable. You can top this off with bracken, ferns, or rushes, which, even though damp, are supposed by many of the mountain men to be perfectly free from rheumatism. 'Tussock' grass, on the other hand, is generally supposed by them to be very deadly, even though apparently dry.

In addition to your two tents you should take an extra tent fly, and with this you can form a sort of flying passage between the mouth of your tent and the stone and sod chimney that are invariably built by every camp cook, as soon as he has time available. The cooking is done under this, and your clothes, if wet, are also hung under it in front of the fire, and it is useful in a thousand and one other ways.

Your rifles, beside their cases, should each have a waterproof cover with straps attached, to sling over your shoulder, for in the steep ground whoever is carrying your rifle will want both hands to hold on by, and help him to keep his feet; besides which he may have to carry a stag's head home on his shoulders in addition to the rifle, which he could not possibly do if he had not his rifle slung. I think the ordinary flat case is infinitely preferable to the 'leg of mutton' case, as it is easier to strap on to a pack-horse, and is decidedly better for carrying cleaning rods, vaseline

and other gun-cleaning impediments in, than a 'leg of mutton' case.

You should also have a waterproof cartridge bag (Payne-Galway's pattern is the best) to put your loose cartridges into when you come into camp at night. With much snow or heavy rain everything becomes damp that is not under waterproof, and a fog is worse than either snow or rain.

A really good telescope is a *sine quâ non*, as in these high mountains with their deep ravines a stag can be easily picked up in places which it would take many hours to reach, and a weary tramp is often saved by having a strong glass to make out his points before starting.

The majority of your stores you should buy at what you might call the colonial base of your operations—*i.e.*, Dunedin, Nelson, Wellington, or wherever it may be, and they should be packed in boxes say $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ by 1 foot, as that size is convenient not only for the pack-horses, but also for any hand portorage that there may be over extra rough places, besides being a very useful size to form tables or seats in camp. You not only pack your stores in them, but also your whisky and cooking utensils, etc. Ordinary sacks for packing potatoes, meat, and bread in, can be procured locally, as well as their contents.

An outfit for a ten days' tour I find, after various experiments, should consist of the following articles of kit and commissariat; and in this list I am calculating on only one shooter, his gillie, and

cook ; and if a second shooter and gillie goes, the list must be altered accordingly.

TO BE PUT INTO THE CANVAS BAGS.

2 complete Shooting Suits, fairly thick, and either green or stone-coloured.

1 pair Gaiters ; untanned leather is the best as a protection against biddy-biddies * and thistles, which are very numerous in parts, and because being soft and thin they don't retard you climbing.

2 pair Shooting Boots, of such size and weight that good nails, which are indispensable owing to there being so much rock work, are not felt through the soles, and yet are not too heavy to unnecessarily tire you with all the climbing you are sure to have.

1 Light Mackintosh.

2 Jerseys.

2 Flannel Shirts.

2 Drawers.

3 pair Stockings or thick Socks.

6 Large Coloured Handkerchiefs.

} Can be washed
in camp.

2 Small Bath Towels.

1 Suit Warm Flannel
Pyjamas.

2 Pillow cases (can be
stuffed with Birch

1 Cardigan Jacket.

Feathers), or

* Biddy-biddies are something the same size and shape as a small English burr, and like them, when they touch anything, they freeze on for all they are worth ; but they differ from the burr in that, as soon as they attack you, they split up into fifty pieces apparently of their own accord ; and as each piece holds on with quite as much tenacity as its parent, they are certainly no *improvement* on the burr !

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 Air Pillow. | Nail Scissors. |
| 2 Flea Bags, <i>i.e.</i> , Blankets sewn up all round except at one end. | 1 Piece of Soap in soap box. |
| 1 Good Rug, Fur or otherwise. | Tooth Brushes. |
| 1 Waterproof Sheet. | 1 Small Hair Brush. |
| 1 Pair Goloshes (indispensable for pottering about camp in place of slippers). | Bootlaces. |
| 1 Small Sponge. | Screws to replace lost Boot Nails. |
| 1 Nailbrush. | 1 Flask. |
| | 6 Muslin Tea Bags for billy tea. |
| | 1 Linen Bag for sandwiches. |

TO PUT INTO TIN BOXES.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 10 lbs. of fresh Spiced Beef (for sandwiches). | $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of Pepper. |
| 8 lbs. of Bacon for breakfast. | 4 lbs. of Fresh Butter in four bottles. |
| 6 half-pound tins of Tea. | 2 lbs. Chocolate to take on to the hill to eat as "an 11 o'clock." |
| 2 three-pound packets of Sugar. | 3 lbs. of Candles. |
| 3 tins of Jam. | 6 boxes Wax Matches (keep in your waterproof cartridge bag). |
| 3 tins of Marmalade. | 2 bars Sunlight Soap (for general washing purposes). |
| 3 tins of Californian Preserved Fruit (the most acceptable thing to eat when you come in dead tired). | 3 bottles of Whisky. |
| 1 Jar of Table Salt. | 2 Dessert Spoons. |

2 Table Spoons.	6 Dish Cloths.
2 Tea Spoons.	Kitchen and Waste
2 Knives and Forks for shooters.	Paper, for covering up open Jam Pots, etc.
4 Knives and Forks for men.	1 piece White Linoleum, for Table Cover.
2 Enamel Plates for shooters.	1 Pot Vaseline } for gun Flannel } cleaning.
4 Tin Plates for men.	5 lbs. Powdered Burnt Alum, for preserving trophies.
2 Enamel Cups and Saucers.	Tin Labels, numbered in duplicate from 1 to 8 for heads and skins.
4 Tin Pannikins.	Copper Wire for above.
1 Enamel Basin.	A couple of sharp Shoemaker's Knives for skinning heads.
1 Tin Basin for washing up in.	
1 Corkscrew.	
1 Tin Opener.	
1 Tomahawk.	
1 60-foot Clothes Line.	
1 Gridiron.	

TO BE OBTAINED LOCALLY.

A Billy, or tin pannikin.	Potatoes.
An Iron Pot for boiling potatoes.	Bread (rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per man per day).
Meat (sheep on the ground).	Flour ; depends whether your cook can make scones.

If you have an outfit like the above, you will find you have everything you want, and nothing super-

fluous. I perhaps might have added medicine, but it is not necessary, and

“ Better to hunt the fields for health unbought
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.”

I recommend anyone proposing to go stalking, to write to his gillie that is to be, and tell him to have a good manuka, or better still a miki-miki stick, some five feet long, ready for him, and warn him *not* to shoe the stick with an iron tip.

The deer-stalking season is open for two months, March and April, but the only chance of meeting with any great success is to stalk in the rutting season when the stags are roaring.

Then only do the big stags emerge from the bush, and to attempt to procure them at any other time would, as in Kashmir, be only waste of time and vexation of spirit.

This may seem criminal to the Scotch stalker who knows that the stag's alertness and cunning become blunted at this season, and that in the open 'forests' of Scotland they would then fall an easy prey to his rifle. But in New Zealand the conditions are different, and a stag on emerging at this period from his dark haunts in the bush into the open country seems all the more shy and wary, and it taxes all one's resources and ingenuity to circumvent him.

FALLOW DEER,

though of course not to be compared with the

real article in the shape of red deer, is yet a very agreeable sport, and one that does not entail such elaborate preparations or pre-arrangements as the nobler sport. Fallow deer have, far from being an importation failure, proved to be almost the reverse, as they have become in many parts quite a pest to the farmers in the vicinity of their haunts. Under the most favourable circumstances fallow deer's natural habits preclude them from affording any real good stalking, as they love the woods, and at no time of the year have large areas devoid of cover any fascinations for them. They are nocturnal feeders, and no sooner has darkness covered the land than they start on their predatory expeditions to the nearest grain or turnip fields, only to retrace their steps and seek the friendly covert as near dawn as possible. To successfully pursue them consequently means very early rising and much disappointment, though exception proving the rule, as in every other phase of life, a good buck is often secured in the middle of the day and when least expected.

In parts of New Zealand the herds have assumed very large proportions indeed, and efforts are being made to catch as many of these as possible, and distribute them over a larger area of country.

With the extent of range that they enjoy, and the excellent pasturage and food, the fallow deer have not only increased in numbers but in individual size, and though no one has been very lucky in the

last couple of years (as far as I know) in securing any phenomenal trophy, there is no doubt about there being some real 'boomers' amongst the herds, as shepherds and mustersers have often come across them, and can vouch for their lusty proportions of horn and carcass.

GOAT SHOOTING.

At one short period of the year when deer-stalking is over, the fishing season has closed and the small game-shooting season is not yet opened, the energetic sportsman could spend the time in many a worse way than wild-goat shooting.

Goats, like pigs, are one of Captain Cook's original importations, and though now wild and wary, on viewing a herd their domestic origin is at once apparent on account of the varied coloured coats they carry, which range from black to white.

This taint of the farmyard must, I fancy, unconsciously raise a prejudice against the animal in the mind of a man shooting them. Though he may have had a hard and difficult stalk, and have successfully bagged an extremely wary old 'billy,' there must always be the feeling that he is not *really wild*.

Who would not sooner shoot the wild goat of the Rocky Mountains or the thar of the Himalayas, though neither of these have such fine horns or make such a good trophy?

Perhaps in generations to come he will fix upon a definite pattern for his coat, but till then he cannot

cross this great dividing line between the wild and the domestic animal.

They are scattered over both islands, but principally inhabit the rugged cliffs on the sea-coast.

Their haunts are, as a rule, difficult to get at, but when once there, though the climbing is most perilous, they are fairly easy to stalk if you keep above them.

They attain a great size, and often carry really fine heads which are well worth a little trouble to secure.

As a matter of fact they are seldom disturbed, as the average man in New Zealand who is keen on stalking lays himself out for the red deer during the whole of his holiday, and then has to hurry back to polish his office stool or look after his 'run,' and so has to leave the goats to the few more leisured individuals.

There is some very good goat-shooting within twenty or thirty miles of the capital, but though so close it is in a most ungetatable place, and involves a journey by rail and a forty-mile ride to get there. A rugged coast and heavy surf shut off the shortest route by boat, and impenetrable bush on hilly country makes the direct land route impossible.

An expedition against them means camping out, and so entails as much preparation as for deer-stalking.

The goats seem everywhere to have thus well chosen their ground, and it is in a great measure due to this fact that they owe their peaceful existence.

CHAPTER III

SHOOTING

PHEASANTS AND PARTRIDGES

UNFORTUNATELY, though the imported pheasant did wonderfully well at first, as in a lesser degree did also the partridge, they never got beyond a certain stage; in fact, in the South Island the pheasant has very nearly and the partridge quite died off. Whether the reason for this was the birds eating rabbit and sparrow poison, or whether the hawks, weasels, stoats, and ferrets killed them off, or whether the country did not suit them and they did not thrive after a certain time, I can't tell. Probably a certain amount of each cause is responsible, though there being more left in the North Island than the South rather points to the rabbits and their concomitant surroundings as the main cause, as there are many fewer rabbits in the North than the South.

However, if pheasants had become the success that they at first promised to be, it is a moot question, in my opinion, whether they would ever have afforded very much sport. 'Stuffing' a great

gollar-eyed cock pheasant as he blusters up in front of you is not much fun, and anyone who has been accustomed to shoot pheasants as they should be shot would never dream of firing at a bird in that position. The latter is such a very easy mark, and the difference between the few short neck feathers that are left floating in the skies after tearing down, out of the clouds, a real rocketeer going like lightning down wind, and the huge bunch of tail feathers that are generally the result of a shot at a rising bird, where you often cannot even see his head and neck, makes the generality of New Zealand pheasant-shooting very tame sport indeed, as it is seldom, if ever, a pheasant can be brought over a gun in the way it should be. The reason for this is that beaters are very hard to get and too expensive altogether (7s. per day would be the least you could hope to pay them), besides being perfectly untrained to beat; and another reason is that there are no isolated woods between which you could persuade birds to fly, the only cover being huge patches of hopeless evergreen bush, of several hundred acres in extent, and no rides through them. Pheasants again, in democratic New Zealand, where the very name of 'English Game Law' is an abhorrence and only whispered of with bated breath, would have little chance with the poaching fraternity, as no bird is easier to poach, and his size alone and edible qualities make him well worthy of a cartridge, to say nothing of a snare.

Partridges might fare better, as the merry little brown bird rising wild in front of you is no despicable mark. But against his success I should say the country, taking it all round, is not very suitable. Partridges must have arable land, and there is very little of that commodity in comparison to the huge areas of grass land. They must also have fences or other cover to breed in. Certainly some districts are all that could be desired, especially in the North Island—fields of moderate dimensions, plenty of fences to nest in, and a very fair average of cultivation; but in the enormous sheep-runs, which are simply oceans of grass, partridges, unless driven, would be very ungetatable. And the difficulties in the way of driving partridges are very similar to the ones I have just quoted apropos of pheasants, besides there being no suitable fences (in grass land most fences being wire), to say nothing of belts of trees to drive over. Of course on the outskirts of all sheep stations there are few ‘Cockatoos’ (as small agricultural farmers in New Zealand are called), but their few cultivated fields would only attract a small proportion of birds, and what they did attract would probably all fall to the Cockatoo himself whilst the birds were feeding in the early morning.

In certain localities in the North Island, however, pheasants are fairly numerous, and some very enjoyable days may be spent in shooting them, or rather in bagging them, as the charm is not in the actual shooting so much as in working the

dogs, and finally outmanœuvring some particularly cunning old cock.

After all, perhaps, when you are working hard all day to try and get five or six birds, you derive as much personal satisfaction in bringing each one to bag as you would in pulling down with dexterous shooting several of the highest and most difficult of rocketers, when you are expecting a bag of a hundred head or more.

In the latter case the skill and sport is mostly in the actual shooting of the bird, while in the former it is mostly in the getting of the bird.

QUAIL SHOOTING.

This sporting little bird has in some parts of New Zealand quite sustained the hopes of success that on his first importation were centred on him, and the Nelson district and also the Auckland and Hawkes Bay Acclimatisation Societies are to be specially congratulated on their successful efforts to increase their numbers.

About Nelson they are very numerous, and huge lots of one hundred to two hundred may be seen at one time, and if judiciously broken into suitable cover they really afford most excellent sport. In this particular district the surroundings of the sport vary so much that it can almost be separately labelled under two distinct headings, viz., the fern shooting on the hill-sides, and the log clearing on

the level in the bush. The hill-side shooting is possibly the most sporting, for one reason, that the walking is more difficult, and for another, that there is always a more satisfactory feeling in bowling over a bird darting down-hill like an arrow, than killing him on the dead level. Who does not know the grim satisfaction that one has in stalking and knocking over an old cock grouse, that only stops his crowing to plunge headlong down the face like a Monal pheasant in the snow-capped Himalayas, and to see him hit the heather far down below you, and fairly bounce off it again like a football? Quail shooting on New Zealand hill-sides is much the same, and though the Californian quail has not the size of his Scottish rival, his very smallness makes the shooting of him much more difficult and equally entertaining.

He is a noble little bird too, with his gaudy plumage and the saucy little crested head, and there is no game-bird that flies that is more difficult to shoot under the circumstances under which it is generally found.

A dog is indispensable for his pursuit, as they will lie like stones in any thick stuff, and have actually to be kicked up in many instances. A setter or pointer has grand opportunities of distinguishing himself with them, and a good retriever is also a *sine quâ non*.

The log-clearing shooting is very similar to the hill-side shooting, excepting the difference in the shots that you get, and also the liability there

is, owing to the close proximity of the bush, for the quail to take refuge up in the trees.

This perching propensity that they have is their only failing, and nothing can be more riling than when you have found and flushed a good bevy, to see every man jack of them fly into the nearest tree and practically snap their fingers at you.

Of course most of them can eventually be ousted with stones, but when it comes to flinging a rock at a bird sitting on a twig like a cock robin, all the pleasure in shooting him disappears.

There at one time was an indigenous quail in New Zealand, but he has absolutely disappeared now, and his place is advantageously taken by the two species that have been imported, viz., the Californian quail and the Brown or Australian quail, which is similar, if not identical, with that found in Italy and the South of Europe.

Though the Australian quail is fairly numerous, it has not increased with very rapid strides, and the Californian species is the one that promises to be the success; for, as I have before remarked, this species is very numerous at Nelson, and although only a recent importation in the Auckland district, it promises to become exceedingly numerous there. In other parts of the North Island the warm weather seems to suit it admirably, but in the colder South they are very patchy, but whether because of the cold weather or the rabbit poison I do not venture to quote an opinion.

They are excellent eating, and deserve every encouragement.

The Virginian quail has quite recently been imported, and, so far as can be judged at present, they are doing well.

They will undoubtedly oust their Californian cousins in public favour, if they can manage to increase their population sufficiently.

As compared with their said cousins, they are a bigger bird and have not their objectionable habit of flying to the top of the nearest tree and singing at you ; and moreover, when a bevy, or 'mob' (as every collection of any living thing is called in New Zealand), is first put up, they at once scatter in all directions and do *not* fly all together into the nearest available piece of bush. I wish them all prosperity.

BLACK SWANS.

These birds, which have proved one of the successes of importation, are inhabitants of Australia, and it is the identical animal you see on Australian postage-stamps. He is not so elegant a bird as his fair white brother, and rather spoils his appearance when swimming by carrying his neck perfectly straight up and down instead of in a graceful curve, like the English white swan. Nevertheless he is a very great addition, as well as a very ornamental one, to New Zealand lake scenery, though shooting him is looked on as rather tame sport.

He is only fit for the table after very careful manipulation, and possibly this fact, and the good round fifteen pounds that he weighs, may tip the scale in his favour, when it hangs in the balance whether you shoot him or not.

Another factor that possibly may often save his life is that 'no hits outside the head count,' as his body at even a very few yards' distance is invulnerable to shot. Shooting a rocketeer artistically is, all the same, a delightful sensation, and I fear it would take me many years before I could resist having a crack at one sailing over my head, if I happened to have a gun in my hand. It is an immense satisfaction to crumple one up and hear his fall behind you, and it is seldom, except with these swans, that you get a chance of a pull at such a heavy bird coming fair and square over your head.

Swans, as a rule, do not decoy, though on occasions they decoy to duck decoys as readily as the ducks themselves; and I was told by a man who I believe has put up the record day for the last six or eight years, that on that particular trip they were, to use a fishing term, 'fairly on the job.' They kept settling continuously amongst his decoys, and when disturbed by a shot at a duck, or the flying tea-bottle that at first was much in requisition to drive them away, they knocked the decoys off their pegs, and sent them flying in every direction with their great sprawling wings and feet, and were altogether a most uncommon nuisance.

A peculiarity about swans is that when fighting at night they invariably fly west in pursuit of the setting sun, and a skein of black swans on the wing is one of the prettiest sights imaginable; and it is not surprising to find how often Gordon, Paterson, and other Australian poets make use of them in their poetry.

“As I lie at rest on a patch of clover
In the Western Park when the day is done,
I watch as the wild black swans fly over,
With their phalanx turned to the sinking sun ;
And I hear the clang of their leader crying
To a lagging mate in the rearward flying ;
And they fade away in the darkness dying,
Where the stars are mustering one by one.”

A. B. PATERSON.

WILD DUCK.

No one, I think, can truthfully state that in any country in the world has he met wild ducks that did not fear man, or at all events did not absolutely dread him after a few of their comrades had been under fire ; and New Zealand, though peculiar in the extraordinary fearlessness of most of its indigenous birds, is no exception when wild ducks are brought on to the tapis.

The colony is fairly well endowed as far as ducks are concerned, and despite the first assertion I make, there is in New Zealand a duck that, although only found in the wildest of wild spots, is more fearless of human beings than almost any

other bird in the world. This is the little 'Blue Mountain duck,' who loves to dwell far up in the mountains amidst their snow-fed torrents, and he will literally sit on a stone and watch you approach him, whistling at intervals to his mate, until you can knock him over, if it so please you, with a stick.

But he is such a jolly little bird that to slay him is little short of murder, and personally I should have to be very sharp-set indeed to turn my hand against him, as many's the time he has cheered me up in the dusk as I have trailed dog-tired along some mountain stream to my camp, after a hard day on 'the tops' after the bonnie red deer.

He is not the commonest duck in the colony—far from it, as that position is held without a question by the 'grey duck,' ordinarily abbreviated into the one word 'greys.'

The grey answers to the mallard of Europe, and is the *wild duck* of New Zealand, and there are certainly 80 per cent. of greys amongst the whole of the duck tribe.

He is like a small light-coloured Rouen duck, and scales under 2 lbs. They are very strong on the wing, and as you shoot them mostly in the cold weather, their plumage is carried more closely on those days than on warm ones, and they require a heavy charge—big shot *and* straight powder—to account for them, especially for the second barrel, as ducks coming up wind

to decoys recover themselves and 'go about' *very* quickly.

Another species of duck that frequents much the same places as the grey, and is nearly always found in small numbers amongst them, is the 'Shoveller.' They are only small ducks weighing some $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb., and are very easily recognised, for though the duck is rather of sombre hue, or, I should rather say, of a neutral tint, the drake is a gorgeously handsome fellow, with mottled white markings on his head and shoulders, and not unlike a cock pheasant in colouring.

Besides the above three species of duck, there is the 'Pochard,' the 'Wood Teal,' and the 'White-winged Teal' (this latter, according to strict ornithology, is, I believe, really a duck).

That comprises all the native inhabitants of New Zealand as far as the duck tribe go, except a very well-known and much-persecuted bird which is called a 'Paradise' *duck*, though he is without doubt a small goose.

The 'Paradise' is very plentiful in parts, a very beautiful bird to look upon, an indifferent bird to eat, but affords a certain amount of sport when nothing better is available. Those are his chief claims to distinction, and for the various methods by which he and his fellows are done to death I will refer my readers to the duck-shooting articles they will find further on in this volume.

His colour, and the striking difference between the plumage of the male and female, are possibly

the Paradise's most peculiar attributes. The drake is a grand metallic, almost black fellow, with some yellow feathers in his wings, that form a square patch on them when at rest. The duck is a rich sort of foxy red, with a pure white head and neck; and as at all times of the year are they seen in pairs, they make a very striking feature in most landscapes, and rather remind one of the old Brahminy ducks in Northern India.

One method of duck shooting is not described, although it is very much in vogue in parts of the North Island. This is, being silently paddled up a river by a Maori in his canoe, and shooting the ducks as they rise out of the rushes on either bank. It reminds one very much of the shooting in the Norfolk Broads, and no puntsman, however efficient, could possibly punt more silently than the Maori paddles.

I have heard of using a steam launch in place of a canoe, but that, of course, can only be carried out on the larger rivers, and at best is only a very poor substitute for the Maori and his canoe, and it rather savours of a pleasure party down the Thames than a sporting expedition.

PUKEKO SHOOTING.

The pukeko, or 'swamp turkey' or 'swamp hen,' as he is variously named, but whether correctly or not I cannot say. In appearance he is much like the English bald coot, a big water-hen with



To face p. 62.

Paradise Duck.

a red top to his head. He is not what you might call a very sporting bird, as he is a beggar to run and very easy to hit when he does get up; in fact, he is very little different from a water-hen. The only way to get any sport out of him at all is to collect a large party of guns (ten or a dozen) and walk *up wind* in line along the edge of any lake, or across a swamp, where they are pretty numerous. They will run in front of you till they get to the end of their cover, and then get up and rocket back over the guns down wind.

They must then be killed very dead, for without a good dog it is as certain as fate that they will never be retrieved. They are most extraordinary hidiers, and most tenacious of life.

It is also not bad fun picking them off with a rook rifle.

One rather curious feature of pukeko life is the way they take their meals in a corn-field, especially in a wheat field. The straw is too long for them to reach the ears of corn from the ground, so they carefully break down the straws half-way up, and bend the upper half over, forming a sort of platform. When the pukeko has bent over a certain amount he jumps on to this platform, and discusses all the ears within reach at his leisure, finishing off with the ears he has previously bent over to form his platform!

All corn-fields in the vicinity of any place where pukeko abound are liable to their inroads, and when the corn is cut, regular pathways of platforms are often found.

When driving pukeko always carry a long manuka stick with you with branches at the top. When a pukeko is coming towards you, stand still and hold up the manuka upright in front of you, and the pukeko will come straight on without any fear. This may seem an improbable yarn, but it is absolutely true.

PIG HUNTING.

"The boar, the boar, the mighty boar I sing."

Yes, but I sing of a far different animal in New Zealand to the "grim grey boar" of scorching Hindostan, and the New Zealander has his destruction doled out to him in a far more ignominious manner than his Asiatic brother in the Shiny East, that home of the most exciting work ever devised by gods or men. I sing not of one who is descended with an unblemished pedigree from a countless line of ancestry, and whose forebears were contemporaneous with the ancient prophet Mahomet who lived in the dim ages of long centuries ago, but I sing of one whose ancestors were born and bred in the pigsty of some homely farmyard, with no more laudable object in view than to supply the succulent though unromantic hams and bacons of commerce. Such is the New Zealand 'pig.'

His history is simple. Captain Cook, when he discovered New Zealand and other islands in Australasia, also discovered that on very few of them was there any indigenous animal to supply

food to human beings. In consequence he liberated on the different spots at which the old *Endeavour* touched, one or two pairs of the *porcus communis*, of which he had a supply on board for ordinary consumption. The first he turned out were, if my memory for dates does not fail me, in the year 1776, and the present supply of wild pigs in New Zealand are the offspring of these. An extra big boar is generally called a 'regular Captain Cooker,' but whether he is considered to be one of the original ones because of his size I don't know!

They have grown to be perfectly wild, and many of them are not unlike the real wild boar, but they have not yet forgotten to squeal when hurt, nor have they yet developed that bull-dog courage and absolute gameness which is the Indian boar's chief characteristic.

They have of course increased enormously, especially in unfrequented parts and where the Maoris, whose staple form of diet they have been for many years, could not reach them; and they are much appreciated by the hardy prospector or surveyor, who but for them would get no change of his menu—Maori hens and rabbits—for weeks together.

Any method of killing them is considered fair, as in very few parts indeed is the country at all suitable to riding them and killing them in the orthodox sporting manner, viz., by spearing them from horseback.

Many are shot with rifles and guns, many are killed with dogs, and many are killed by a com-

bination of the two ; but for sport pure and simple there is only one way that should be allowable in New Zealand, and that is with dogs and a man on foot armed with a good knife.

This is sport indeed, and danger is by no means lacking in its successful accomplishment.

Unless regular organised hunts are got up from some homestead, your pig hunt generally occurs from a camp. No surveyor or gold miners' camp is considered complete without a dog, or more generally a pack of dogs ; and whilst the surveyor is taking angles or levels, and the prospector is fossicking around for the illusive reef with gold sticking out all over it that appears ever in his dreams, their canine companions are doubtless doing a 'shikar' in the bush 'on their own.'

Before long with any luck these latter will cross the trail of pig, and their natural instincts, to say nothing of former experiences, make them as mad keen after pig as a fox terrier is at old 'Brock,' and they are not long in running master pig to a standstill and 'sticking him up,' with his back against a rock, and his vicious tusks towards the enemy. But there are pig dogs and pig dogs, as well as terriers and terriers, and only one in many will go in at once ; and if they do so before their master comes on to the scene, it's any odds almost on there being one pig dog less in very few minutes.

The master as soon as he hears the camp pack throwing tongue, gathers at once what is in the

wind and listens eagerly for the familiar sounds which tell him the pig is at bay, when he at once abandons his work and makes his way with all speed to the spot. His first journey is generally a fruitless one, as the pig as soon as he sees him, in most instances again makes a bolt and another bid for freedom. However, unless he is a peculiarly obstinate beast the dogs very soon 'bail him up' again, and on hearing the welcome baying the man is soon up to the hunt again, and this time his part of the performance may come into play.

Encouraging his dogs to seize the pig by the ear (the spot that they find after very few trials is the only one that the pig is vulnerable on), he cautiously works his way round to the rear of the scene, and watching his opportunity rushes in and seizes piggy by the hind leg, gives him a hoist and a twist, and before he knows where he is, Master 'Soor' finds himself on his back, and in a twinkling has some six or eight inches of cold steel introduced behind his shoulder, and travelling forward and upwards towards his throat. The pig squeals blue murder, the blood spouts out in a torrent, the dogs rush in and their barking is changed to a worrying growl, and in a very short time 'le mort' is sounded and the struggle is over.

The choice portions are cut off for the tent, and the dogs are rewarded with what is left, and dogs and man return to their respective occupations.

Capital fun while it lasts, especially if you

are camping with a pal and are depending on pork for your evening meal. Good old Captain Cook !!

As I said before, many pigs are killed by being shot instead of knifed after being bailed up by the dogs, and others are shot with a rifle whilst feeding outside the bush, but it is not difficult for anyone to imagine, even if he has not tried it, which sport is most exciting.

CHAPTER IV

FISHING (RIVER AND SEA)

TROUT FISHING

THE amount that could be written under this most exhaustive heading rather alarms me, but I intend to restrict my efforts, and summarise as well as I am able the principal features and facts that I have gleaned, not only from personal observation, but from numberless articles that I have obtained and read on the subject.

Trout fishing is doubtless the most popular sport obtainable in New Zealand, and since the first ova was imported into the country some thirty odd years ago from Tasmania, the amount of money spent on their welfare one way and the other comes to a very large sum indeed.

There are several Acclimatisation Societies in New Zealand (as I have elsewhere remarked), but for the sake of brevity I will only quote particulars about one of them, viz., "The Otago Acclimatisation Society," which is one of the most thriving of any of them as far as fishing is concerned, and these particulars will give a very good idea of the work

that has been and is still being done in the interests of fishing.

Within the last sixteen years this society alone has spent £10,400 on the introduction and propagation of fish, the most part of which sum has been expended on trout, and the remainder on salmon.

During the season of 1897 they distributed in the various rivers in their district 141,000 brown trout, 154,000 Scotch burn, 39,000 American brook, and 34,000 Loch Leven trout, and this same society has within the last twelve years liberated $5\frac{1}{2}$ million of eyed ova and fry in their rivers.

With such figures one would expect to have good trout fishing, and more especially as New Zealand seems to suit trout in every way. The rivers are rapid and clear, rising out of springs on the mountain sides, and running over rocky or shingly beds with any amount of shelter in the shape of big boulders and overhanging banks. They are as a rule most sporting rivers to fish, and you have every variety, so you can afford to pick and choose.

Waders are of course a necessity, and I strongly recommend wading stockings and brogues in preference to waders with leg and foot in one piece. All waterproof, if put in front of a fire, dries, so to speak, away from the fire, so if you attempt to dry these latter in this manner you will assuredly find that they are damp inside when you put them on in the morning, as it is impossible to turn them inside out. Wading stockings on the

other hand you turn inside out as you pull them off, and they are as dry as chips in no time. You may say, "Why wear waders that don't keep the water out and therefore want drying?" Be it remembered that in the excitement of battling with a big fish in a river with an uneven bottom, you may very likely step into a hole deep enough to let the water in over the top, and then where are you? and how are you going to get your waders dry for next day if you cannot turn them inside out? This accident does not occur of course every day, but it is not at all uncommon, and after every hard day there is sufficient perspiration set up to make the insides of the waders damp.

Filling them with oats and then putting them in front of the fire is the best method of getting out of a predicament of that sort; but then after all said and done that is not very satisfactory, and you can't always get oats!

No, there is not the very slightest doubt that thin wading stockings up to your thigh, and brogues with real good nails in them, are the thing for New Zealand fishing. By brogues I don't necessarily mean the shoes with a filagree pattern on them which are the general acceptance of the word; but ankle boots that lace tight round the ankle and prevent shingle, which is very prevalent, getting in them, are an improvement on low shoes.

For rods, if you take two, a good stiff double-handed 14-foot greenheart or split cane, and a light 10½-foot split cane with steel centre, are the best

in my opinion, made in three pieces so as to be handy to carry in railway train or buggy, and an extra fly top and a spinning top for minnowing in the hollow end when possible. And don't do as a friend of mine did the other day when he broke his fly top, leaving only some twelve inches of his top joint. Thinking he had left his spare top in the rod cover at the hotel when he put his rod together there prior to starting, he fished for the remainder of the day with his ruined rod, and never found out till he got back to the hotel at night that he had had a spare top in the butt of his rod all the time!

In the North Island a single-handed rod is generally preferred, but *chacun à son goût*.

A good quick-winding reel and some sixty yards of fine waterproof silk line will meet the case in that direction, and for the casts I advise a would-be fisherman to take some medium thick ones as well as fine ones, as strong wind is your almost constant companion during the fishing season. "Three days' wind, three days' rain, and then an earthquake," was the description of a week of New Zealand weather given me on my way out there, but on personal acquaintance with it since, I find only in the first particular is the definition correct; but wind does duty for the other two, as it is almost constant, whilst rain and earthquakes in many of the best fishing centres are almost equal rarities. You can always tell in England or the Continent when a man has lately been in New Zealand by the way he holds on to his hat when he goes round a corner!

The question of flies is another instance of "where angels fear to tread," but undoubtedly more fish are killed with the 'Governor,' both red and orange tipped, than any other fly in New Zealand. Among other varieties that you should have in your fly-book are March Browns, Black Gnats, Alders, Blue Duns, Peverils, Hare Lugs, Teal Wings and Red Spinners. All these can be purchased in the colony, and may be as good as you can possibly want; but care and discretion must be used, or one day you will find yourself on a distant stream with the intention of spending a week there, and discover that the new batch of flies that you only bought just before starting are made up (if not using eyed flies) on gut that would not hold a bullhead, and your sport is entirely spoilt, and the sooner you pack up your traps and return home the better. Needless to say, the same remark applies to locally-purchased gut when using eyed flies.

A couple of light canvas bags, one for 'tucker' and the other for your fish, completes your outfit excepting the *gaff*. This should be of the telescopic order, and either fixable to your fishing bag or the strap round your middle that keeps your wading stockings up.

A *landing-net* is of little use; it is cumbrous and awkward in flax and amongst the 'mathauri' bushes, and a fish that isn't worth gaffing isn't worth taking any trouble with, especially with a double-handed rod. Swing him straight out or beach him.

The light single-handed rod is useful to take with you in case you strike a river where the water has got too low for the big fish to take at all; but one of the beauties of fishing is that 'hope' is such an important factor in its pursuit, and you are consequently always hoping to get hold of that record monster, or one of those six, eight or ten-pounders that you see constantly in the deep still water of nearly every river; when if you do hook one and lose him on account of only having a light rod and tackle at work, you never forgive yourself.

In the latter half of the season the *grasshopper* and *cricket* entirely supersede the fly, and also rival it in the skill required for its successful use. They are easily collected on the banks of any stream where fish will take it, and a judiciously expended shilling to any sharp boy on the evening before you propose fishing, will invariably supply you with a tobacco or match-box full at breakfast-time next morning.

The *creeper* or *black fellow* is another very deadly lure for trout. He reigns principally in the early part of the season, and also the early part of the day before the heat of the sun has brought out flies. He is the larva of the dragon-fly (the same as the English 'stone-fly'), only perhaps a trifle bigger, and is rather a loathsome object at best. The aforementioned 'shilling and sharp boy' procedure will be required again, and will be equally efficacious in procuring the raw material if in a creeper district, as they only live under stones on banks of rivers in which fish feed on

them. In this instance, however, I strongly recommend you not to have their tin receptacle put on your breakfast table or even left in the room, as besides being hideous to look at and horrible to touch, they use a scent on their handkerchiefs that few people can appreciate! Nevertheless they are very deadly to trout, and fishing with them is rather like artistic worm-fishing.

Minnowing is the prime method of the lot to get big fish, and for those who like it New Zealand is their happy hunting-ground. Sole-skin phantoms are the best kind of minnow, unless you can make up one out of trout skin yourself. These latter I have seen make double the bags that the best artificials have done on the same day, although both fishermen were equally good; and however roughly they are made up, trout seem to prefer them to any other sort.

Nottingham and Mallock reels do not seem to meet with much favour in the colony, but enormous bags are made with the ordinary reels on a spinning rod, especially at night.

Of course, trout like everything else have many enemies to contend with, and in a democratic country like New Zealand poaching is very difficult to cope with. The average man who is not an angler, and is perchance living or camped some dozens of miles from any town, cannot see any harm in gaffing or spearing a dish of trout for a meal, especially when Providence in the summer months has more or less thrown them at his head by allowing the

streams to run completely dry, except in the few deep clear pools in which the surviving trout have congregated. Very often a great big trout finds himself in so shallow a pool that it is no trouble whatever to shovel him out with your hands alone, and it is lucky when you find one in this quandary and alive, for if not caught and put into deeper water his life would be only a question of days. Small wonder that consequently a very large number of trout meet their fate in this way.

But a far worse fate than this is portioned out to them as a rule, for lime and dynamite are very freely used in their destruction, and then innocent and guilty suffer alike. The small fry that are useless for food, as well as the large ones, share in the wholesale massacre. Lime in sufficient quantities is always easily procurable, and also dynamite, being so universally in use in all mining districts (which means pretty nearly all over the colony), is likewise within almost everyone's reach. A very favourite *modus operandi* for dynamite is to drive all fish from above and below a bridge to take shelter under the bridge itself—a sanctuary they are very apt to seek naturally and of their own accord—and then when a sufficient number have collected the concealed ruffian on the bridge drops in his death-dealing charge over the parapet and lies low for the explosion. After that he has simply to reap his harvest.

Netting is also a good deal resorted to, and the plan which is generally found to be most efficacious

is to drive the fish down a broad shallow, across which a temporary V-shaped dam has been made with a big baggy net at the apex of it. If this dam is built just above some deep pool which is a favourite haunt of trout, and allowed to remain there by the weather for some days, trout get quite accustomed to it, and feed up through the opening regularly, only to fall a certain prey to the ruthless poacher on the days he sets his net in below them, and drives them back to their home.

The principal natural enemy of trout is the shag. This bird is a species of cormorant, and has a most enormous capacity for swallowing big as well as little fish, and he has also a most insatiable appetite. It is fabulous what numbers of fish have been taken out of the crop of some of the birds that have been shot, and they take down a pound trout as easily as possible. Most Acclimatisation Societies, knowing what immense damage they do, give a reward of 2s. or 2s. 6d. per head for all that are destroyed at a certain distance from the sea, and their destruction affords rare sport to the schoolboy out of hours who can borrow his father's gun. The birds build all together like rooks, and 'shag rookeries' or 'shaggeries' are generally found on the cliffs round some more or less inaccessible part of the sea-coast, and great marauds in boats are occasionally organised against them during the breeding season. When fishing, it is by no means an uncommon occurrence to catch a trout with a hole drilled into his back by one of these pests,

and no measures are too stringent to encompass their complete extinction.

Another natural enemy of trout, but luckily only in their extreme infancy, is the crawfish. He is a perfect terror on 'fry,' and one or two will clear off an enormous amount in a very few days.

There is also a New Zealand kingfisher, rather larger than our English bird, that does a certain amount of harm, but no one grudges him his dinner, as he is not very plentiful and his beauty makes up for his offences.

Another enemy of the trout, though I hardly know whether to designate it as a natural one or otherwise, is the pollution that a river receives from gold mining, either on its banks or in its watershed. The process of mining, be it quartz, alluvial, or dredging, means that the river is so filled with deleterious matter or thick sand, that no trout can exist in it, and in a very short time their gills get clogged up and they die. It is a pity, but as mining is one of the principal industries of the colony I suppose it cannot be avoided, and we must bow to the inevitable.

In some districts bush fires have also caused great havoc among the trout. The water gets poisoned by the ashes of the burnt trees falling into the water, and the trout have thereby become almost exterminated for the time being in some of the North Island streams. With the aid of the Acclimatisation Societies, however, the streams are soon re-stocked.

Size of Trout.—A splendid opportunity for observing the growth and development of trout has been afforded by their importation into the virgin waters of New Zealand, and many good lessons have been learnt from the experiment, not the least noteworthy being the time-honoured fact that it is no use turning 'fry' into rivers already stocked with fish. Fry turned into virgin streams is altogether a different thing; and there are at present in the Dunedin Museum two stuffed trout that weighed 14 lbs. and 16½ lbs. respectively when caught in 1874, which were indisputably two of the fry that just five years previously had been turned into the then virgin waters of the river they were captured in. The river is now stocked plentifully from source to mouth, and only fifty-three fry were originally liberated in it in 1869. On the other hand, Mr R. Chisholm, a great authority on New Zealand pisciculture, considers that only one per thousand fry reach maturity when turned into streams already stocked with fish.

Doubtless if satisfactory results are required, no trout younger than one or even two years old should ever be turned out to replenish or increase the stock in water where fish are supposed to be getting scarce. To accomplish this, additions to a stream must therefore be from artificially incubated eggs and hand-reared fry. The Acclimatisation Societies have realised this years ago, and each one has its own hatchery, where not only is the ova of the trout in confinement matured, but also many

thousands of eggs stripped from wild fish during the spawning season. In every instance have these hatcheries proved themselves to be an immense success.

In the big lakes where trout will not be tempted by either fly, minnow, or other device of man, netting is allowed and encouraged, and magnificent fish are often captured, 25-pounders being by no means exceptional.

The next largest specimens generally fall a prey to the minnow at the mouths of some of the big rivers. At night-time is the best hour to catch them,—10, 12 and 15-pounders are often caught by this method, and quoting from *Trout in New Zealand*, by Mr H. Spackman, a case of a trout weighing 26½ lbs. and another of 25 lbs. is recorded. The conquerors of these two mighty trout are named and their addresses given, so there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the fact. They were both fishing with live bait.

With regard to fly-fishing this same authority, Mr Spackman, says that the largest trout he has caught by this method himself was 6½ lbs.; but this weight has often been exceeded, and personally I have killed an 8-lb. fish myself (on a red tipped Governor), and there are many authentic instances of bigger fish than this. However, 3, 4, and 5-pounders are more usual weights, and ought to content anyone.

Rainbow trout were introduced from California in 1886, and they promise to be an enormous

success, especially in the North Island, where it is apparently too hot for brown trout to reach any great size in the rivers. The big snow rivers and their tributaries in the South Island are where these latter flourish.

SALMON FISHING.

Why I say *fishing* I hardly know, as until October 1896 no authentic instance of a true salmon having been actually caught is on record. This fish that I mention was caught in a fisherman's net outside Oamaru Harbour, weighed between 8 and 9 lbs., and was submitted to Mr G. A. Boulenger of the British Museum, London, who pronounced it to be a true typical salmon (*Salmo salar*).

Considering the immense quantity of salmon fry (and two-year old fish as well) that have been liberated in New Zealand waters during the last twenty years, it is a remarkable fact that only one specimen has been secured. This seems more remarkable still when you have seen the rivers into which these fish were turned out, as more ideal salmon streams, as far as appearance goes, could not be found if you searched the whole world for them.

The fry had every chance, as they were turned into virgin waters without a trout or fresh-water fish of any kind in them, and why they did not do well is a problem no one yet has been able satisfactorily to unravel. The sea, into which the most favourable rivers empty themselves, becomes

deep within a very few yards of its beach—in fact, goes almost sheer down at once; but whether this has anything to do with it or not, I personally can offer no opinion. Suffice to say that all attempts to provide salmon fishing have up to date proved most futile, though the Otago Acclimatisation Society (which is the only society that has yet tried experiments) are still sticking to it with bulldog pertinacity, and this year have again imported huge shipments of English ova, and I am glad to say the Canterbury Society are taking a share of these to try them in their district.

Appended are a few details of the efforts already taken to successfully introduce that king of fish into New Zealand waters; and the following numbers have been turned out:—

In 1872	.	100,000	English salmon fry.
" 1874	.	96	" " "
" 1875	.	1,400	" " "
" 1879	.	2,500	" " "
" 1885	.	50	" " "
" 1878	.	31,000	Californian salmon fry.
" 1887-8	.	99,310	{ New Zealand reared salmon fry, including two-year old fish.
" 1888-9	.	40,000	
			New Zealand reared yearlings.
" "	.	1,360	New Zealand reared two- year-olds.
" 1889-90	.	259,500	New Zealand reared fry.
" 1890-91	.	17,000	" "
" 1891-92	.	16,000	" "
" 1892-93	.	18,000	" "

In 1893-94 .	18,000 New Zealand reared fry.
„ 1895-96 .	1,310 New Zealand reared yearlings.
„ 1897-98 .	555 New Zealand reared two-year olds.
„ „ .	1,400 New Zealand reared yearlings.
„ „ .	10,000 New Zealand reared fry.
Total, .	<u>617,481</u>

Over half a million fry and young salmon, and only one "come back to roost," and that ignominiously captured in a net in the open sea!

All these fry were not turned into one river, but into several, some snow-fed, some flowing from huge inland lakes, some from springs up the mountain sides that snow does not affect, and all in waters that as nearly as possible resemble the Tweed or Dee or other famous Scotch river.

Some few 'sea trout' (*Salmo trutta*) have also been distributed, but with no results as yet.

SEA FISHING.

Though perhaps not a very high form of sport, it is probably better round the New Zealand shores than in most other places in the world; certainly the fish lack neither size, quantity, nor variety. The usual method of hanging a line over the side of a boat and waiting for a bite is generally adopted; but as a 40-pounder may take your bait at any minute, there is a great deal more excitement in it than when you know you are at

best only going to pull out a medium-sized whiting. The water is in some places so clear that on a calm day the bottom of the sea and the fish can be quite plainly seen, deep though it be, and under these circumstances the fishing is much more diverting. If a small fish comes along you pull your bait away, and do not allow him to take it, but await the advent of a big one; you then lower the bait in front of his nose, and can *see* whether you get a bite or not.

There are other forms of sea fishing which certainly rank higher in the world of sport; in fact, if all I have heard is correct, the King fish would seem to be a worthy rival to the tarpon. Unfortunately I am unable to give any details of this fish except that he is caught on practically a tarpon rod and line from the Napier breakwater, that he is an extremely game and handsome fish, and leaps out of the water when hooked, that he attains a weight of 200 lbs. and takes hours to land. I have never heard of his being caught anywhere except at Napier. The giant 'Hapuka,' the 'Stingaree,' and the shark all provide their own lines of sport, and I must not forget 'Pelorus Jack,' who is more of a play-actor than a sportsman. He (I say he, because there is only one) affords capital shooting to the kodak Nimrod, and much diversion to the passenger whose journey takes him through the Pelorus Sound. As every steamer passes through the Sound up comes this great big fish and closely follows the vessel until the exit is reached,

when he disappears again and awaits the next boat. He has not yet been 'described' by the scientist, but he is generally supposed to be the one remaining individual of a school of white whales which years ago appeared in New Zealand waters. Some call him a Belucha, whilst others however maintain that he is a unique fish, and he most certainly is—in New Zealand waters.

The 'Karwhai' is another sea fish which gives excellent sport. He is a well-shaped silvery fish, is marvellously strong and game, and takes a spinning bait well. Shoals of them frequently ascend the rivers right up into the fresh water, where they are often caught when spinning for trout. Though they do not pretend to compete with the trout as regards their popularity on the dining-table, they can give him points in sporting qualities when hooked.

There is little difficulty in hooking them when once you get amongst a shoal, but unless your line is long and strong you lose very possibly fifteen shillings' worth of minnow, trace and line shortly afterwards.

Many a line has been lost and taken out to sea by not having the end tied on to the hub of the reel. It would probably have been broken in any case, but it would most likely have given way at the minnow end where it is more worn and has suffered from the effects of many wettings, and then most of the line would have been saved. I do not know to what weight beyond 20 lbs. they grow, but the average fish is from 5 to 10 lbs.

CHAPTER V

RACING AND STEEPLECHASING

I PROPOSE to comment very slightly on this sport, as it is little different in New Zealand to any other part of the world, though in that colony they have had, and perhaps still have, some of the best and stoutest thoroughbreds that have ever existed, and their flyers are all home-bred.

The starting machine (that vexed question in England just now) is in general favour, and it certainly has one most distinct advantage, and that is, it does away with nearly all the long tedious waits that so often occur with flag starts; but whether horses are more liable to be kicked at the post, or are oftener left there on account of their whipping round when the tapes go up, or whether the machine gives better opportunities for 'Captain Armstrong' to whip his horse round purposely, I leave to abler minds than mine to discuss, and will dismiss the subject.

Owners run their horses very much oftener in New Zealand than is done in England, and this rather strikes a new arrival in the colony, as

distances between the meetings are so much greater than in England, and horses are liable to so many more risks. I wonder what an English owner would think of sending his horse from Newmarket to Gibraltar, to run certainly twice if not three times there in one week, and very often twice in one day; and then to send him to Bordeaux to run the same number of times the following week; and after getting through another week at Paris, to have him arrive back in England just in time for a big meeting at Newmarket! Yet this is no exaggeration of what is done in New Zealand every season, at least once. The big meetings at Dunedin, Christchurch, Auckland, Hawkes Bay, and Wellington follow each other, and many horses go all through the tour; and to get from any one of these places to the other, means at least twenty-four hours by sea between port and port (by no means the same thing as between racecourse and racecourse), and entails certainly a railway journey at one end or the other, if not at both. From Dunedin to Auckland, for instance, is twelve hours by train, and at least four days by sea, or, if you like it better, five days by sea—in fact, a very similar journey as from Newmarket to Gibraltar; yet this journey is often taken by valuable horses. And considering that the Islands are in the 'Roaring Forties,' and that a stormy sea generally rages round the coasts, it makes it still more remarkable.

The racing itself calls for no remark either on

the flat or between the flags. It is as good as needs to be, and though there are few owners who are in a position financially to run for the mere honour and glory of winning the stakes alone, there is not more chicanery than in other countries ; and what there is reaps its own reward more summarily than in other countries, for in-and-out running is immediately challenged by the stewards, without waiting for any objection to be lodged by jockeys or owners of horses in the race, and a searching inquiry at once instituted. The effect is that the race is not always given to the horse that first passes the post ; and if the stewards once disqualify a horse, they can, if they so wish, ordain that all money staked on this particular horse by the public on the Totalisator shall be returned to the stakers without even deducting the ten per cent. commission. But this privilege is only applied when the horse is disqualified for some error in entry or false description which the public cannot possibly be expected to know, and is never allowed when anything happens in the actual race, such as a horse being deliberately pulled. The ten per cent. commission I have just mentioned is a charge that is always retained on all moneys staked (with the above exception), and a meeting with a Totalisator has therefore an advantage over one where bookmakers are in vogue, in that this ten per cent. of all moneys invested on the machine being retained for the benefit of the meeting, allows better stakes to be given, as some thousands of

pounds very often pass through the machine in one day. Bookmakers are not allowed on the majority of New Zealand courses,¹ and a stranger misses the old familiar "two to one bar one," but still he can always put his sovereign on to his fancy with the Totalisator, and be certain of not being welshed. Of course, by this method of wagering you never have that satisfactory feeling you experience when you have got on to a horse with a bookmaker before the stable have put their money on, and in consequence secured better odds than starting-price, and it is a drawback not to know what odds you have got on the Totalisator until the starting-bell rings ; but to some its worst features are that they have to stump up their ready money to back their fancy, and also to collect it if they win, at a ticket-office with a crowd round it that reminds you of the booking-office at Victoria Station on Derby Day morning. More especially is this a nuisance if you happen to win on the last race of the day, for what with the crowd at the paying-out window, and no money being paid out until a quarter of an hour after the winning jockey has weighed in, it is extremely probable that you miss your train.

The jockeys ride much shorter than in England, though in more the English style than the American, and they certainly don't waste much

¹ If bookmakers are allowed to bet they are compelled to pay for a licence to grant them the privilege, and as these licences cost quite a large sum of money they benefit the stakes in more or less the same manner as Totalisator does.

time on their get-up, and one misses the nattily-turned out jockeys that one is accustomed to see in England ; but still there is no reason because a man chooses to wear a badly fitting cap and jacket and a tight pair of moderately white *pantaloons* stuffed into a badly-hung pair of boots, he should be any less competent horseman than the man who has his clothes and boots well built.

The stakes, as a rule, are very liberal, the most valuable being the New Zealand Cup with £1500 added, and there are several races worth from £1000 to £500 each.

The Grand National is the most valuable steeplechase, and is worth £650, and £500 is given for a hurdle race in at least one instance.

Christchurch divides about £16,000 a year in stakes amongst its four meetings.

Racing is certainly a very popular pastime in the colony, and every little mining township has its annual meeting, whilst the big centres have their three and four meetings in one year.

Besides first-class racing, trotting is greatly patronised, and also a heterogeneous lot of hack races ; and though possibly in these last two classes of sport it is just as well to know before the race what the stable is backing, it is only what happens in every other part of the world when the racing is more for the pot than the sport.

But first-class racing in New Zealand flourishes exceedingly, and English owners are beginning to realise that good horses are bred in the colony, and

are trying to secure some of the plums. The worst of importing horses is that their true form is never satisfactorily arrived at in their new homes, on account of acclimatisation difficulties, as well as recovery after the long six weeks' sea voyage; but it cuts both ways, as a moderate horse in New Zealand is as likely to benefit by the English climate, and run there *above* his New Zealand form, as a real good horse in New Zealand is likely to be beaten by second-raters in England. But now, having given a meagre sketch of what is probably the most popular sport in the colony, I will conclude with the remark that there is a great deal of enjoyment to be got out of any of the big meetings: horses are well trained, courses are good, ditto the stands, the comfort of the public is considered a most important item, and the field of horses for any big event such as the New Zealand Cup is worth going a very long way to see.

STEEPLECHASING.

I will only repeat my remarks on racing to embrace the subject sufficiently. The fences are not high but very stiff, and to touch them at all hard means a certain fall. They are, however, nothing like as formidable as the steeplechase fences on 'the other side,' *i.e.* Australia, where at the big meetings, such as Caulfield, Randwick, and Flemington, fatal falls for both horse and man are almost more the rule than the exception.

HUNTING.

As the immortal Jorrocks states—"The image of war with none of its guilt, and only five-and-twenty per cent. of its danger." A good definition doubtless, and one that rejoices in being clothed more or less with truth, but whether we can quote it as the 'sport of kings' in New Zealand is another question. I fear me nay, as, alas! the 'little red rover,' that prime factor in the sport Jorrocks writes about, and the overcoming of whose arts and wiles is the very essence of its enjoyment, is not there, and his place is at best only filled by the timid hare, whilst several packs do not soar to greater distinction than simply a 'stinking bit of fish'! But wherever Britishers are, there there will be hunting, and if the nobler branches of it are denied them from force of circumstances, they will put up with an inferior sample and make the best of that. In New Zealand, as I said before, the best sample to be had is with the 'merry harrier,' and it's wonderful what runs the colonial hares (whose ancestors were another successful importation by the Acclimatisation Society) give in many instances before yielding up their scuts; points are made that many a fox-hunter would never believe unless he happened to be present; and scent holds on the grass land which has not been too much foiled by sheep, in a marvellous manner.

New Zealand hares are not only bigger, but

are straighter-necked, stouter, and generally superior to their Northern Hemisphere brethren.

The hounds are as a rule colonial bred, as no dog of any description is allowed to land on New Zealand shores without doing six months' quarantine on an island which the Government has set apart entirely for that purpose. This law cramps, if it does not entirely do away with, any enterprise in the way of importing hounds direct from England. But the prevention of hydrophobia is of course the object, and although the law is a very annoying one to individuals, I suppose, looking at it from a public-spirited point of view, it is a very just one. The majority of packs appear to have more fox-hound than harrier blood in them, and pace with a breast-high scent is decidedly good for harriers, though not quite fast enough always to keep hounds out of the way of the field, who, I am sorry to say, override them in a way that would produce most surprising invectives from even the very mildest huntsman or master in England. There is plenty of music, and no riot.

The horses are good, but their long untidy manes and tails, ungroomed coats, with their weird saddles and unburnished steel work, detract a great deal from the workman-like appearance of the field in general, and offend a stranger's eye; and though of course, like in everything else there are exceptions, well-turned-out horses are very few and far between. The generality of them, owing probably to low feeding (chaff instead of oats), are as quiet as the

proverbial sheep, and that terrifying piece of red riband that in a crowded gateway in the Midlands you so often find just the right (?) distance from your leg, is never either seen or required. They are nearly all ridden in snaffle bridles from the day they are broken in, and it is very unusual to see a horse with his head properly placed in consequence.

The men who ride them, although their hearts are in the right place, do not follow in the footsteps of our D'Orsays of the Midlands, as they all turn out in rat-catching kit, with, as often as not, *trousers* instead of the orthodox breeches and boots, and it is looked on almost as a sign of incompetence when a man affects a well-built pair of either of these latter articles! Carrying your hunting crop *à la* 'fishing rod' is common, though as a rule the line is dispensed with! But, as I have elsewhere remarked, good clothes do not make good riders, and there are a large majority of any field of horsemen you like to pick out who, if you put them on a good horse, would show their backs to most men even in hard-riding Leicestershire.

Few of the gentler sex compete, or even grace the field with their presence on horseback, but still there are some Dianas in every hunt, and amongst them there are one or two most brilliant performers.

Wire-jumping is not so prevalent as one is led to believe; in fact, naked wire is in most hunts seldom negotiated by more than one or two thrusters, as it can nearly always be avoided without losing your pride of place.

A naked wire fence is really not so terrible as it sounds. The New Zealand horse has been born and brought up in a wired paddock, and knows exactly what it is, and what it means if he makes a mistake in jumping it; moreover, if you have a fall over it you generally fall clear, and you can always see beforehand that you are not going to land on a harrow or into a pit. Serious accidents over wire are very rare.

The country varies, of course, immensely. In the north of the North Island the walls and small fields remind one rather of the Vale of White Horse, and it is also very similar in the way of hills and undulations. South of the North Island the Rangitikei country is flat with enormous fields (or 'paddocks,' as they are called in New Zealand) of from one to three hundred acres, divided by high gorse fences; but as there are no ditches at either side of them, and seldom any wire run through them, they are fairly negotiable although their appearance is very formidable. Christchurch, in the South Island, is very similar country to this last, but the wire run through the gorse fences is the rule there more than the exception; whilst in the Timaru and Hawkes Bay country naked wire is more prevalent than anywhere else, and much more often jumped.

There are no gorse coverts, and hares are seldom drawn for in the few plantations that there are, the usual procedure being 'thistle whipping.'

The various packs are kept up by subscriptions by local people.

I will not touch on drag hunting ; it is the same all the world over, and one of its chief charms is that a good luncheon can be indulged in before braving the perils of the chase, whereby a little extra confidence may often be inspired. .

POLO.

This particular form of sport in New Zealand ought by rights to eventually rival both India and England as regards players and ponies, for everything in that colony lends itself to its pursuit, but its popularity is not increasing in the way one would like, as the following statistics will demonstrate.

It was first brought prominently before the public in 1890 by Captain Savile (a sporting member of the then Governor's staff) giving a challenge cup to be competed for every year by the different polo clubs ; and with a view to carry out the donor's wishes in an orthodox manner, a Polo Association was at that time formed, and all recognised clubs were affiliated to this Association. In 1890, the year this Association was incorporated, only seven clubs were in existence ; and to show how the game has fluctuated in popularity between that year and the present time, it is sufficient to state that although now there are only sixteen clubs that are registered by the Association, during these last seven years no less than twenty-two new clubs have been formed, of which thirteen (including four of the original clubs) have broken up and retired

from the field. It is much to be regretted that so many clubs that have successfully tided over the difficulties of formation have had to dissolve, but I suppose their very youth has been their downfall, as without an indisputable and mutually recognised authority in the shape of some well-tryed veteran like John Watson, or some extra capable exponent of the game, young players are apt to give way to petty jealousies and have internal squabbles amongst themselves; though I know some clubs have simply failed from want of support and sufficient playing members. Even now there is at least one club composed of only its team—*i.e.* four players; and for their games these men have entirely to depend on the neighbouring clubs, and the most flourishing clubs only boast of some ten or twelve playing members. The ponies, which, needless to say, constitute the backbone of the game, are cheap, good, and fairly numerous; the grounds to play on are obtainable in most big centres, and as a rule are distinctly above the average; and the game itself only occupying an hour or so late in the afternoon, enables busy men to take part in it without let or hindrance to their business. But curiously enough it does not take on with young New Zealand; perhaps because he is inclined to designate it as the 'toff's' game, and to imagine that it is consequently rather a feeble game.

Rugby football is intensely popular with him, and is a game in which he excels to a remarkable

degree, and so it is surprising to find that when he gets too old to play any more (and this is not very old) he does not more often take up polo, as it is the one game which can then replace football for him. The joys and excitements of the two games are very much akin, and in both games the same qualities of dash, nerve, head, instant decision, and combination constitute most important factors. The necessary activity in football would have to be replaced to some extent by the necessary good eye in polo, and the New Zealander generally possesses another most important quality, viz., good horsemanship.

The price of ponies reminds one of the poloing days in India, when forty rupees (about £4) would purchase a machine for 'subalternus impecuniosus' to learn to play the game on, and £10 in New Zealand will often put you in possession of a pony that in London at the present day would command ten times that sum at least. I suppose nowadays, though the game has been played for some ten years, an average price for a really first-class pony would be £20, and one of the most eminent players in the colony told me the other day that he thought £50 would buy the best pony in the country. I fear these prices will not last for ever, especially when you read of a pony fetching 750 guineas at Tattersall's, and of a regiment on leaving India selling their thirty ponies there at an average price of £120; but at present in New Zealand the majority of players

are careful not to spoil the market of the colonies, so let us hope polo pony value will always keep within bounds. The 'keep' of ponies in New Zealand is not a very serious item, as during the winter months they are treated like ninety-nine out of every hundred other horses out there, viz., are turned out to fend for themselves in some grass paddock at mere nominal value per week; and curious as it may seem to English eyes, this treatment seems to agree wonderfully with them, and they come in again as fat as butter. A coarse, common rug is buckled firmly on to them with two straps round the animal's ribs, another in front of his chest, and a fourth round the root of his tail, and he seems as happy as a king. Grooms are very scarce, poisonously incompetent, and ruinously expensive, and there is a rare field in New Zealand for the congested ranks of grooms in England to take advantage of. It is a very ordinary occurrence (and much to his credit) to see a polo player rubbing down his own pony and changing saddles, etc., as he does not possess a groom at all.

An inter-club polo tournament takes place every year, when the 'Savile Cup' is played for, and also the 'Junior Cup,' which the Polo Association has since presented. These tournaments take place at different centres all over both islands, and are very similar to the inter-regimental polo tournaments in India. They bring together all the cheeriest people in the colony, and the polo week is a regular round of gaiety day and night, and

a great social gathering where profuse hospitality and good fellowship reign supreme.

It is a pity that with such natural facilities this prince of games is not more patronised, but better times may be coming in the dim by-and-by.

YACHTING.

For a devotee of this form of sport, New Zealand on parts of its coast is most eminently suitable, and Auckland harbour, although only a harbour, is as fine a stretch of yachting water as man could wish to see. The harbour itself is no less than ten miles long by one and a half miles broad, and in addition to this expanse a yacht can sail on an inland sea for more than double as far again. Wind is steady and there is not too much of it, and the only drawback is the tide, which is so strong that in anything like a calm day yachts have to drop their anchors unless the tide is favourable.

In addition to Auckland all the big harbours on which the chief cities of New Zealand are built are favourite sailing waters for those that favour the sport, although at Wellington the sudden and extraordinarily violent squalls that sweep down off the surrounding hills give the pastime there a strong element of danger. Nelson, Akaroa, Lyttelton, and Dunedin, all have their yacht clubs, but somehow yachting does not seem to 'catch on' very much with the New Zealander. A regatta day there is very different to what one

sees at even the small coastal towns in England, and a New Zealand fleet has a very different appearance to the crowd of butterfly craft of all sorts and sizes that one sees spreading their gossamer wings to the summer breezes of the 'Channel of Old England,' of the Bay of 'dear, dirty Dublin,' or on those long reaches of the Clyde in the 'Land o' Cakes'; but then one must remember that New Zealand is but fifty years old, and if one looks at the strides she has made in this the first half-century of her existence, what will she do in the future?

It is only some twenty years ago or so that Maori war-canoe races were the chief features of an Auckland regatta, and in those days there was certainly no lack of excitement amongst the competitors or lookers-on. These great canoes, manned by fifty, sixty, or even a hundred smart Maori warriors each wielding a paddle, and that with no puny arm either, raced one against another amidst the very keenest excitement possible. A gigantic head-man or chief would stand in the bow of each canoe, and another in the stern, and encourage the rowers with the most frantic gesticulations and threats, and the rowers themselves would also add to the general din by every individual one of them shouting to the utmost extent of his brazen throat; and when you think that three or four of these canoes were started together, you can imagine that the fun was fast and furious, and the noise and uproar amongst

all these naked sweltering savages and their hosts of brother tribesmen on the shore, was not far removed from Pandemonium.

Needless to say these canoe races were never very long, a mile being, I suppose, the outside limit, not only because no lungs could stand a longer strain than this, but also because the Maori himself is not a man of stamina and can't stay.

The schooner and cutter races in those days were also conducive of much rivalry, sometimes as many as twenty starting in one race; and amongst the veritable tritons of the deep who sailed them and knew every inch of the harbour, every current, and how to extract the last ounce out of their respective vessels, emulation waxed very high indeed.

But the days of those particular schooners and cutters are over, and they have completely disappeared with advancing civilisation. The former were employed entirely on the trade with the Pacific Islands, Samoa, Fiji, and the like. Now this work is carried out by the floating palaces such as the 4000-tonner I am now on, who does her 350 miles a day, and supplies her passengers with every luxury, from the menu which the Savoy Restaurant would be justly proud of, to the fresh-water shower in every bathroom. The cutters I speak of were, in the early days before the wharfs were built, the only means the big merchantmen had to unload their cargoes; and it

must have been a fine sight to see a swarm of these gallant little craft swoop down on one of these sailing leviathans when she arrived after her hundred or more days' passage from the 'old country,' and having packed themselves up to the gunwales from the contents of her capacious bosom, dash straight at the shore at high tide, and run themselves as near high and dry as possible, so that when the tide receded, drays could come right alongside them and load up.

But nowadays, beyond the few well-found pleasure yachts, and fewer still racing yachts, who compete one against the other in their own waters, and occasionally brave the perils of the Southern Ocean outside to race against other clubs, there is very little excitement in comparison to what there was in the old rollicking sea-rover sort of days.

In Australia, however, yachting and yacht racing is as popular as it is in England, so I suppose it will not be very long before New Zealand catches the infection, and the day may come when there is as much interest taken in an Australian Cup as there is now when a *Vigilant*, *Defender*, and *Valkyrie* meet to fight for that jealously-guarded trophy, 'The America Cup.'

May that day be not far distant!

Part II

I

A WEEK'S STALKING ON THE SHORES OF LAKE HAWEA¹

BY THE AUTHOR

Saturday, April 17.—The unusual surroundings of tent life, and our natural keenness to be at work, were not conducive to slumber on the first night, and the earliest sound of the men moving about to light the fire, etc., found us both wide awake, although it was very dark and long before the time we had fixed to be called, and it seemed hours before the by no means unwelcome reveille, "Five o'clock, please, gentlemen," sounded outside our tent.

Out we tumbled without a moment's hesitation, both of us asserting that we had never slept better, though it leaked out afterwards that, if the truth had been told, we both had spent about as uncomfortable a night as was possible, for we had not got into the knack of covering ourselves up so completely that no cold could possibly get at us, and old

¹ Part of this appeared in *The Field*, and is reprinted by kind permission of the editor.

Jack Frost had found out a good many weak spots in our armour, and let us know it, too! Inside the tent was, however, like a hothouse compared to outside, and the water in our basin was simply a solid block of ice, ditto the sponge. Under the circumstances our ablutions did not take long, and after a hasty breakfast, and each with a bit of lunch in his pocket, we were soon off for our respective beats on the hill.

My beat, to commence with, took me across a wide creek with water in it well over our knees, or rather my gillie's knees, as he did covert hack for me till we reached the other side, and then we had to face a steep ascent of about 1500 feet, which very speedily set the circulation going again.

We got to the top just as the sun rose, and, working along the ridge, very soon saw game, which on investigation proved to be a small eight-pointer by himself. I stalked him to see whether he was worth shooting, and got to within a hundred yards of where he was now lying down.

"Not worth disturbing the ground for," says my gillie; but I only half agree, as I am dying to drill a hole into my first New Zealand stag. However, my mind is luckily made up for me by the sight of a hind coming over a low spur, closely followed by four more, and then a grand ten-pointer, who as soon as he gets on to the rise salutes me with the first roar I have as yet heard in New Zealand. The little chap I had originally stalked did not move for a minute or two, though

the big stag headed straight toward him, and finally, when he did get up, he had the cheek to stand and stamp at the big fellow as though to assert his rights to the hinds in his own particular corrie. He did not carry out his intentions, however, as on closer inspection of the big stag's proportions he thought discretion the better part of valour, and 'cleared' at a great pace.

The ten-pointer then drove his hinds into a small gully, and as soon as they were out of sight I went in at them direct, as the wind was right.

Unfortunately we had no preconcerted arrangements about stalking, and my gillie, who had always previously done the stalk for his master, did not understand that he was to do otherwise with me, and between the two of us we botched it somehow, as the deer suddenly came out of the corrie and made off. Even then I could have had a good shot if my gillie had been following close at my heels as I expected he was, for the stag cantered across a small opening well within range; but on putting out my hand for my rifle, I found the gillie twenty yards away from me, and of course by the time he gave it to me the stag was out of shot. A bad commencement. However, the day was young, and my gillie very confident of seeing more beasts, so it was no use wasting time, and we tackled the ridge again.

During the vicissitudes of this first chase we had got down to very nearly the same level as when we

started, so we had a tremendous long climb before we discovered another stag, and again Dame Fortune would have nothing to do with me.

I heard this stag roaring long before I saw him, and either owing to the clear atmosphere of these mountains making sounds seem closer, or my ear being untrained to such precipitous ground, I was a long time finding him; in fact I stalked two corries, making certain he must be in one or the other of them, before I picked him up with the glass still at least a quarter of a mile away from me, and considerably above me. He was lying half asleep on a very unapproachable knoll at the end of a spur, with a hind and a calf some little distance above him, and I could only see one spot from which I could possibly hope to shoot him. I managed eventually to reach this all right, but found him to be at least two hundred yards away, and no possibility of my being able to get closer, as I was just as near the wind as I dared be. He was quite undisturbed, so I put myself into a very comfortable position to take him directly he got up, and prepared to wait for him to rise. I cannot quite make out what then happened, but think that the hind and calf (which were out of my sight) must have fed up the hill he was lying on, until they got my wind, for the stag having turned his head towards where the hind originally was, suddenly, without the slightest warning, sprang up, and in two bounds was out of sight. I got in a snap-shot but could not tell the result, though somehow felt

pretty confident of seeing something more of him when I got to the place where he had disappeared, more especially as the hind and calf were not joined by the stag as they made off round the face. However, I could neither find him nor any blood on his track, which took him down a sort of deep gully into the bush, where of course it was useless to follow him. He was a good beast, eleven points, and a very good spread. I then made for home, stalking for fun to within twenty yards of a small knobber *en route*, which I had afterwards to regret not having shot for venison.

April 18 (Easter Sunday).—Started early for a long Sunday walk to get myself fit, and took my gillie with me to show me the way. As a precaution to prevent him walking too quick for me, I handicapped him by making him carry my rifle. We walked for thirteen solid hours, and visited a part of the forest no one had been in this year, but beyond finding the skeletons of some hundreds of sheep that were the victims of the 1895 winter, all huddled up together behind a big rock, not a single hoof did we see, and we got back to camp tired and disappointed. What a difference a successful stalk makes to the distance home!

April 19.—This morning I made straight up to the place where I had fired at the eleven-pointer on Saturday, but there was no sign of him, although his hind and calf were there all right, so I fear my surmises that I hit him must have been correct; but this vast bush is almost as insatiable as the

ocean, and is certainly more reluctant in yielding up its dead.

I climbed on up to between 5000 and 6000 feet and then sat down to my frugal lunch, overlooking a basin which stretched out any distance below me until it joined the bush.

From mere force of habit I kept my eyes wandering all over this on the look-out, although I had just come right up through it, and I was, I am glad to say, rewarded, for a small brown spot far down near the bush which I thought looked suspicious, suddenly moved! I got the glass on it in an instant and made it out to be a stag, though of what size at that distance it was impossible to tell with any degree of certainty; in fact, my gillie's and my opinion were almost diametrically opposite, he assuring me it was a monster, whereas I asserted it was too small to shoot.

The stag very shortly afterwards began to make rapidly up towards the pass some few hundred feet below me, so in an incredibly short space of time we scrambled down and got into a position from which we could command it if the stag continued the even tenor of his way. I could see him better from my new position, and found that neither of us had been quite correct about his size, but still he was a shootable beast, though only an eight-pointer. He came steadily on to his fate, giving an occasional roar, and over the remains of our lunch my gillie and I discussed where I should let him get to before I fired at him. The sun and shade formed

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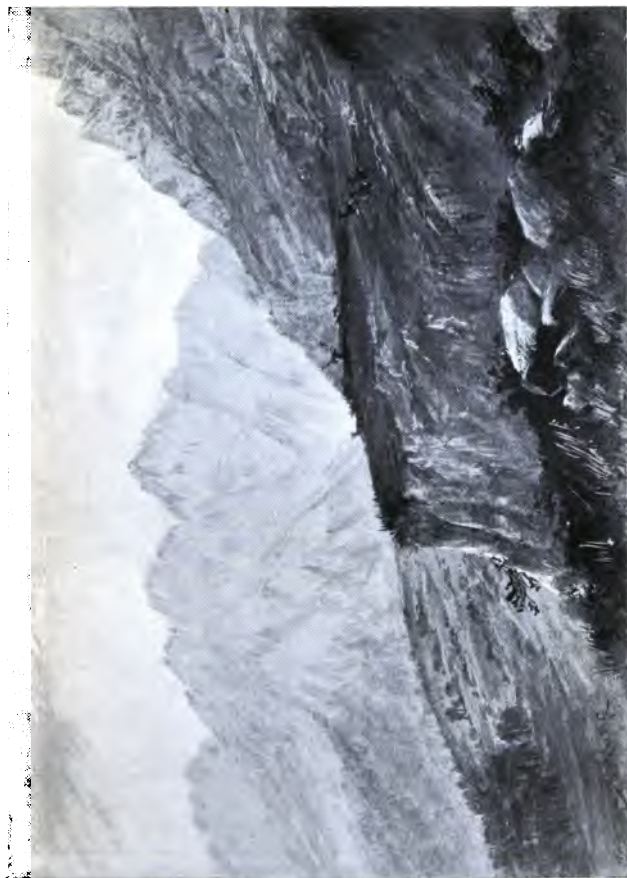
“ . . . a crumpled-up heap of venison . . . ”

[To face p. 113.]

a well-defined line a few feet from the top of the pass and about a hundred yards from me, and we agreed that to cross this line was to sound his own death-knell. He continued to climb steadily up and never faltered or swerved until he got to the very edge of the shadow ; but there some glimmering of an unknown catastrophe seemed to have taken possession of him, as cross the rubicon he would not. My gillie begged me to take him where he was, but I was firm, and at last he stepped proudly into the sunshine, and the next moment was a crumpled-up heap of venison with a bullet through his heart. Obsequies were then rapidly performed ; the time-honoured toast of 'more blood' duly observed ; and leaving a haunch to be picked up on our way home, we continued our way up the mountain side.

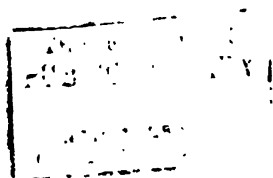
We had not gone for half an hour when I saw a stag and several hinds at the bottom of another basin, and then another stag with his attendant harem lying down on a spur a quarter of a mile or so above where the first lot were. The top stag was the best, but there was only one way to get in to him, and that was to again tackle the tops, which meant at least a thousand-feet climb from where we were. There was no time to waste, so we started at once, and under the hour we were on the summit (marked 6500 feet on the map), and then the stalk was easy enough. I had just got to within twenty yards of where I proposed taking the shot, when a beast of a hind that I had not seen, began barking above me, so I had to get into my place with a rush, but luckily

found the stag and his hinds had taken no notice of the meddlesome old lady's bark, and were all lying in exactly the same place as when I last saw them one and a half hours before. The stag was about 150 yards off stretched out on his side, with his legs out at full length, and his back towards me. The other establishment below him was affording him very little uneasiness, as, beyond an occasional roar and a look round at his various court favourites, he spent most of his time snoozing. I dared not wait for him to rise, as we were at least four hours from the camp and only about two hours of light left, so I had a good look at him through the glass and saw the exact position he was lying in, and also to my delight that he had 'three on top' of both horns, and then made up my mind to let him have it as he lay. The shot was most successful, as beyond stiffening out his legs and quietly laying his symmetrical antlers on to the ground he never moved, and his hinds were hardly alarmed at all, one of them actually not getting up. The other stag, I could see, was also very little disturbed, and so I determined to have a go for him, and I raced down a deep gully to a rock from which I thought I could reach him. This movement, though only taking two or three minutes, gave the first hinds my wind, and they were off like a streak, unfortunately further startling my beast, and when I got to the rock I found the stag cantering away below me with his hinds, between three and four hundred yards off. My luck was in, I tried a shot and hit a stone just in



“The stag was about 150 yards off, stretched on his side.”

[To face p. 114.



front of the stag, which had the effect of turning him back in exactly the opposite direction to what he was going, and as soon as he missed his hinds, he pulled up and stood a moment on the edge of the bush below me. It was a good three hundred yards off, but he looked very distinct, so I fired, and my little .303 bullet dropped him as dead as a stone. The big stag, I found, had no bay tine on one antler, which was a great sell, but still a good eleven-pointer is not got every day, so I had little cause for complaint. The last stag had a nice spread and nine points. A good day's sport. We each took off a head and carried them back to where the haunch was, and left them there to be brought in to-morrow, as we knew it would take us all our time to get home as it was. We had many adventures before getting back, going down one place in the dark that I would certainly never have dreamt of attempting in broad daylight, and having a very bad hour crossing through some thick bush, but eventually we reached camp about 8.30, and our chef's dinner had a very bad time of it.

April 20.—To-day we decided to have 'a spell,' as the two gillies had to go out to bring in the heads and venison. It took eight hours, even in daylight, to go out and bring them in, which time my friend and myself spent in generally tidying up everything, having a bath in the creek, catching the pack-horses for to-morrow's march to a new camp, and on return of the gillies, skinning and preparing the heads. Getting the stag in complete is

most exceptional in these precipitous mountains, in fact it very often happens that a head has to be left out till the next day. It seems a cruel waste of good venison, and it goes much against the grain to leave an entire stag minus his head on the hill to rot away, but it cannot be helped.

April 21.—Started at our usual early hour, and shot our way to our new camp, which was only a few miles away. I climbed up the 1500-foot face, and from there heard a stag roaring, and picked him up with the glass on the opposite face a very long distance off, and close into the bush. We decided we would leave him till evening, as we could have done nothing more if we had gone straight for him, and the place where he was happened to be almost on our road to the new camp. It was a bad decision to come to, as we walked the whole of the remainder of the day over likely ground without seeing anything but a mob of six hinds, and of course found our morning's stag had disappeared when we looked for him on our way home at night.

April 22.—This particular day was fraught with big anticipations as far as I was concerned, for it was the day I was destined to go over some virgin ground into the adjoining valley, and our camp was only pitched where it was for one night, as it shortened the proposed long march for tomorrow. The arrangement was that the pack-horses and baggage should go round by the track down to the lake, and so into the next valley, whilst I fought my way over the top of the range. No one

had crossed over this range between the two valleys for some years, and I started for my journey full of hope. A glorious morning, though the clouds hung about the high tops more than I liked, and everything seemed propitious. We first saw the six hinds I had seen yesterday, and that was all until we got to the saddle of the ridge. This was on our arrival enveloped in cloud, as was all the ground we expected to find deer in on the other side, but there was every appearance of it lifting, and sonorous roars from *three* different parts of the fog kept us on the tenter-hooks of excitement. After a tedious half-hour's wait, in which we got chilled to the bone, the clouds gradually shimmered away to nothing, and sure enough two stags were seen at once. The nearest one, although a big beast, was evidently 'a looker-on' as he had no hinds with him, but the other was a veritable king of the forest. Even at the distance we were from him his magnificent proportions and massive head proclaimed him to be a good deal out of the ordinary, and his deep roar and the number of hinds with him all pointed to his being a prize not often met with. We were only allowed a very momentary view of him, as down came the fog again, and we had only his occasional roar to comfort us. What wind there was was favourable, as we got a few hundred yards nearer him under cover of darkness, and then the clouds lifted again, and there he was in much the same place. This time we managed to get within

measurable distance of him, although we had to cross some ground on which a single slip would have been our last, and we could then examine him at our leisure and try and make out his number of points. Four on the top of one was certain, but he would not turn his head sufficiently to allow me to see whether it was four or only three on the other. I now sent my gillie down to see if the other stag was at all in our way, and he had not gone five minutes before I heard a hind barking in the direction he had taken. I thought he must have crawled on to a hind, being too intent on watching the stags, and the ground was steep and rugged enough to warrant any accident of that sort. I therefore snatched up my rifle and busted up the hill at best pace to intercept the big fellow. On cautiously looking over the ridge which I expected to find my stag within shot of, I found myself suddenly face to face with a hind, and not three yards from her! I had the sense not to bob down, but remained absolutely rigid, and it must have been a comical sight for what appeared to me at least ten minutes. I suppose one minute was more like the time, and then with a bark she slowly moved up the hill. This bark which so terrified me was the salvation of my prospects, as directly the big stag heard it he looked up from where he was, quite 250 yards below me, and then commenced to trot up to his alarmed hinds. These latter all collected together and stood about a hundred yards above me, barking

at intervals, and I found myself behind a big rock in a good position, and nothing to do but wait for my stag to come within reasonable range. His trot very soon reduced itself to a walk, and even then the steepness of the hill did not agree with his great obese sides, and he puffed and blew like a steam engine. He however came on and on, and I had only to keep moving further and further round my rock, keeping the tips of his antlers in sight all the time. Again I fixed in my own mind a spot up to which he should go and no further, and again a curious presentiment of danger ahead seemed to affect him, for just as he reached the spot he turned up out of the gully. he had been travelling in, and commenced to climb the few feet that separated him from the ridge of the spur. What a grand beast he looked, and I already felt absolutely certain he was mine. When he got on to the ridge he slowly turned about three-quarters on to me, and was just commencing one of his now well-known roars, when a sharp report and a tiny puff of brown smoke issued from behind my rock, and his imperial highness went down as if struck by lightning. My gillie had in the meantime come up and was watching me, though he could not see the stag, and his delight at seeing him laid dead in his tracks was, if anything, keener than mine. A magnificent fourteen-pointer, with every point a good one, and though the spread was not very wide, the massiveness of his horns and the extreme regularity of all his points made up for

it. Weighing him in these heights was an utter impossibility, but my gillie had been in at the death of and seen a stag weighed clean 400 lbs., and this one, he thought, was quite 100 lbs. heavier ; but put him at 420 lbs., which is thirty stone, and I am certain I should have been within the mark. It was very unsatisfactory to have to leave this grand beast on the hill, but there was nothing else for it, so taking off his head we made straight down to our new camp.

April 23.—My destination this morning was a famous basin which had already paid heavy toll of big stags this year, but it was not for me to investigate its resources again, as I saw two stags and heard another one in a very rocky precipitous corrie on my way up. The two stags I saw were small, but when at last I made out the other one he seemed to be worthy of my steel, though I could only see his antlers over a distant ridge. I had a very long and arduous stalk after him, taking five hours over it, the three first of which I was in full view of the stag, though I must have appeared to him to be only like a fly on the wall, as I was swarming round a very steep face. So steep was it that my gillie failed entirely and gave up, so I had to take my own rifle and get to safe ground as best I could. When once over the rough ground it was not hard to get in, as no one had been over this ground for a year or two, and any danger was apprehended from below only. I got to within fifty yards of the stag, and knocked him over with my .500 Express,

though unfortunately the brute rolled and fell between three and four hundred feet, and smashed one of his antlers short off—a very symmetrical ten-pointer, though, like all the others, rather narrow. I had a long way to go home, including some miles through the bush, and my gillie, who had come up again before I got the stag's head off, lost the road coming through this, and we were as near as possible 'bushed.' Eventually we got home at 9 p.m., both of us having had a real gruelling.

When up on the heights to-day I had the most splendid of all views I have had yet—a perfect day, wonderfully clear atmosphere, and a picture to look at that few are lucky enough to see. In the immediate foreground an ideal deer-forest stretching far away down below me, a slope sometimes smooth and undulating, at other times broken up by rugged rocks and precipices, and all merging finally into the ever-green bush that surrounds Lake Hawea, whose sapphire blue waters reflected every shadow of the overhanging rocks, trees, and mountains, like a giant mirror set in a frame composed of Nature in her wildest and most perfect state. The background to this is range after range of glorious mountains in endless sequence, some dazzlingly white with fresh snow, others covered with bush, and others a mass of frowning rock, to which Mount Aspiring, towering far above everything else in his snow-clad robes, forms a fitting centrepiece, whilst Mount Cook and Mount Earnshaw act as grim guardians on either flank, the

whole scene being accentuated by the most absolute stillness and silence everywhere, save the occasional roar of some lusty stag from the depths of the bush.

April 24.—Went out by myself to explore a mountain that earlier in the season had been teeming with big stags, but though I walked from daylight till dark, and had a good, though very boisterous wind, I did not see a single animal of any sort or description; the principal feature of my day being lunch, as I found a spring (which is here by no means so common an occurrence as in Scotland) far up among the heights in a small sheltered grassy basin with a magnificent view. A New Zealand lark and a sparrow-hawk appeared as unbidden guests, and were right welcome, and they both vied with each other who should be the tamest. In the sun and out of the wind I most thoroughly enjoyed the rather sumptuous meal I had with me, and which consisted of mutton sandwiches, figs and biscuits, and a lump of chocolate to top up with, and the icy cold water of the spring to assuage my thirst; and though a fair critic who read some of my letterpress before it was printed said the figs and chocolate were the only parts of my lunch fit to touch, I should have much liked to see how many of those perhaps uninviting sandwiches of cold mutton, stale bread, and no butter she would have *devoured* after a few days of my exercise in this exhilarating air!

Sunday, April 25.—A dense fog coming very low down effectually prevented me breaking the

Sabbath, and what was worse was that it was of that particular sort that in all probability lasts two or three days at this time of the year, and which, if it did continue, would effectually put a stop to my going on the morrow into what I had an idea was the very best ground, as no one had been on it for two or three years, partly owing to its inaccessibility, and partly to its precipitous rocks and dangerous shingle shoots.

April 26.—My last day. Local meteorological knowledge was, alas! only too trustworthy, as all the heights were enveloped in cloud. A very early start was therefore useless, and my chance of a stag most remote. I however decided, as a sort of forlorn hope, to visit a peninsula on the edge of the lake that report said had sometimes deer on it, and accordingly about 9 a.m. I started. The wind was very awkward, and it forced me to travel over some most infernal ground, all big boulders which were smothered in high brackens. There was infinitely better ground both above and below me, but in the former instance I should not have been able to see a quarter of the ground, and in the latter I should have been going dead down the wind, so I had no other course open to me. Just before reaching the end of my beat, I saw a stag and five hinds right away straight down below me almost covered up by the fern. They were lying down, and to get anything but a very long and awkward shot seemed out of the question. I made the stag out to be a nice Royal, so I determined

to leave no stone unturned in order to add him to my bag. I dare not try such an indistinct lying-down shot, but I saw a knob of rock that struck out of the hill some distance back on the way I had come, and from there I thought I should be able to command the three or four deer tracks that went through the fern and flax below, and along which, if the stag was moved, he would be almost certain to travel on his way back to his mountain fastnesses. I gave my gillie very careful instructions about moving the deer, and warned him to give me plenty of time to get to the knob, and then away I went back to try the result of the drive. Everything appeared to be going to turn out all right, and I had not been in my place more than a quarter of an hour when I saw a hind and calf making up the hill to the place where I had first sighted the stag from. I thought there was little fear of her crossing my track when she reached it, and I watched her with great interest. Sure enough, directly she got to where I had walked, she whipped round and came straight down to me as hard as ever she could go, and just at this moment I saw my five hinds galloping along one of the deer tracks in single file with the Royal whipping in. Unfortunately they had taken the farthest track from my knob, and would not pass nearer than 180 yards off, but what was far worse was the desperate pace they were coming at. They would not have gone faster if a dog had been at their heels, and the stag with its head up

and his horns flat on his back could hardly live with the hinds. I fear my gillie must have too thoroughly startled them. When the stag got nearly opposite to me and clear of a couple of cabbage trees I fired, but unfortunately the bullet was a bit high, as it carried away some of his rigging in the shape of the bay tine of one of his antlers, and the second shot, though more effective, was also a disgraceful one, as it hit him fair in the centre of his haunch! My 'royal salute' had rather played round the edges. However, I thought his race was about run. He did not pull up for another two or three hundred yards, though his hip was broken, but he then stood and looked at me for five or six minutes, whilst I played at long bowls at him. He was in an open space, and I was nearly covered with bracken, so I dared not move, and could only put up the highest sight of the '500 Express that I was using on this occasion, and try and knock him from where I was. I did not succeed, and suddenly he missed his hinds, who had never pulled up for a moment, and away he went with his leg swinging. I was after him in a moment, and made for a point where I hoped to see him struggling up the hill towards his haunt, but having done the distance in record time, I could see no sign of him, although I discovered there was a patch of thick bush between me and the opposite hill (which looked far too steep for a three-legged stag to get up), and I had great hopes of his having waited in this. When my gillie

came up we followed his track into the bush, and had hardly reached it when with a crash out he came. A grand sight he was too as he stood looking boldly at us about ten yards away, for though he made a gallant attempt to climb the hill, the rest he had had since he was hit had about cooked his goose and he was evidently done, so I told my gillie to finish him. After a long and careful aim he fired, and not only missed the stag clean but let the rifle give him a real good kick on the nose, which gave his face the appearance of having had a couple of rounds with Fitzsimmons! His second attempt was better, and the curtain of the final act of the week's drama was rung down with much satisfaction, though immense regret that the tour was over. This last stag was a good Royal, though knocking off the end of his bay tine was a great mutilation. I could have taken all the venison into the camp, as I killed him almost on the edge of the lake, but, by the irony of fate, my bad shooting had spoilt the only stag out of the lot that was got within any sort of distance from home and on getatable ground.

Bag for one rifle, six stags in eight days' stalking. I have confined myself entirely to my own individual sport, and not referred to my friend's at all. He was not quite so successful as I was, but he had bad luck on one or two occasions, which accounted for it. Next morning we packed up for the last time, and with unwilling footsteps retraced our journey back to civilisation.

II

TROUT FISHING—A GOOD DAY WITH THE 'GOVERNOR'

BY THE AUTHOR

"WHAT a glorious morning, but what an utterly hopeless day for fishing!"

An Italian sky without even a cloud the size of the proverbial man's hand to give promise of any change; not a breath of wind; not a ripple on the deep still pools of the river which disclosed every lurking trout that tenanted their pellucid depths, and reflected every detail of the surrounding hills with the most vivid distinctness of their mirror-like surface; no sound of human voice or crack of carter's whip, but an absolute stillness everywhere, save when the lark climbing into the heavens of his perforce adopted home, trills out to many another exile like himself the lays he learnt from other lands,—and ah! what pleasant thoughts of friendly faces and well-remembered scenes in one's far-distant birthplace can his cheerful fantasies conjure up in even the most unromantic breast!

No country can surely produce such peerless weather as New Zealand can when she is really in the mood for it, the atmosphere is so much clearer than one ever sees it elsewhere, unless it be in California; but delightful as such summer's weather as this would be for anything but fishing, we cannot hope for sport to-day, and yet another new cuticle for one's already much-abused nose and chin is about the most interesting event to look forward to with any degree of certainty.

But still a day's outing on the picturesque banks of an ideal trout-stream is not to be despised, more especially when the only other alternative is such divertisement as is offered at a 'bush pub' in the very diminutive mining village that, despite its size, rejoices in the aspiring title of 'township.'

Such is the outlook that greeted me this thirteenth day of January 1898, when after sorting out a selection of most likely flies, and duly inspecting my *armes de chasse* to see if my gut was sound and my waders dry, I sat down to an excellent breakfast, commencing with porridge and cream, continuing with a grill of succulent half-pounders, and topping up with the universal marmalade which somehow inevitably turns up wherever the Britisher lives or plants his foot, be it at the luxurious breakfast-table of a Melton hunting-box or on the waterless wastes of Afghanistan, the shimmering sands of the Soudanese deserts, or the ward-room of the latest first-class battleship; what a splendid right it would have

been to have taken a patent out for, and how often would it have repaid itself since Lucullus discussed it at the epicurean feasts in his Neapolitan villa nearly two thousand years ago!

At 8.30 to the minute, the sound of wheels stopping at the door heralds the arrival of the buggy and old Mike, whose cheery face looks as keen as mustard at the prospect of a long day's fishing, no matter what the weather be like. He has brought his own old rod with him, which, though it is warped like a bow and is spliced in every direction, I'd back, with old Mike at one end of it, to kill more fish than the finest Farlow that a stranger to the water, however accomplished he might be, could pit against it.

"See to the tucker and my rod, Mike, whilst I put on my waders," and in five minutes I am into my harness and we are off.

A five-mile drive and we arrive at the commencement of my beat, and getting out I send old Mike on a mile or two further to put up the horse at an old rabbit's hut where we propose to lunch.

Even in the short time occupied by our drive a sultry wind had sprung up, and a great black bank of clouds has appeared away to the south'ard looking very like thunder, and before I had put up my flies, ominous rumblings from that direction confirm our suspicions.

Under so many adverse circumstances it might have been excusable to start work in only a half-

hearted way, but I didn't; and I fished every inch of the first reach with the greatest care, though I was not surprised when I had finished it not to have moved a fish.

I then went up to the next reach, a favourite one of mine—a rapid stream some thirty feet across tumbling along out of a big deep pool for some hundred yards under a steep bank, all of it being equally good water, and I had hardly tackled it before the threatened thunderstorm at last burst, and the rain commenced coming down in big heavy drops which increased to a regular down-pour before many minutes; and as, alas! the light mackintosh I always carry was in the buggy, it looked any odds on my getting as 'wet as a shag' and having an uncomfortable drive home at night in consequence.

But I stuck to my guns, and just about the last throw at the top of the reach I saw a grand fish rise at about the place my tail fly *ought* to have been. I say "ought to have been," as there was a strong breeze blowing up the stream, and the water being too deep to wade I was fishing from above the three-foot bank, and what with this fact and the rapidity of the current in one direction, and the wind bellying out my line in the other, I confess I did not have my flies so much under control as a more accomplished fisherman would have had.

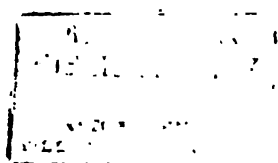
However, I struck, and Providence was kind to me, as I found myself hard and fast into my fish.

He was a big fish but not a very game one, for



“ . . . I found myself hard and fast into my fish.”

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though he gave me a nice run down the rapid water, and took a bit of guiding past the boulders, as soon as I got him into the smooth water and could get down into it myself, I brought him up to me with no trouble whatever, and gaffed him immediately. A nice-conditioned fish that pulled the scale at 4 lbs. 9 ozs. when I weighed him at night.

"Well done!" shouted a welcome voice, and there was Mike, enveloped in my old regimental mackintosh, very thoughtfully bringing me my own light coat, and hurrying up to see me land my fish.

The old fellow I found wasn't at all fit to-day, and the stiff bout of pneumonia he had had only a few weeks before had left its trail behind, and even his indomitable spirit had to acknowledge itself defeated, for he positively *could* not fish himself, and for the rest of the day had to content himself with sitting on the bank, and improving my more or less rudimentary efforts with sage advice.

I rose another good fish at about the same place as I had hooked the first one, but struck too strong and missed him. I followed this up by catching a couple of three-quarter pounders in some shallow water, and then hooked a real game fish in a very turbid rapid, that gave me some capital fun; it was all I could do to keep my legs, and as it was, I got one wader full of water! He leapt feet high out of the water twice, and ran out a desperate amount of line

before I could get a check on him at all, and when I at last thought I had tired him out, and had reeled him up almost to within gaffing distance, away he went again as if he was perfectly fresh, and I had all my excitement over again.

Everything must however have an end, and eventually I had him laid on the bank for our mutual admiration and conjectures as to his weight—4 lbs. 7 ozs. was found to be the exact amount.

I then hooked another boomer, but he made straight for the shelter of a big tree-root which was close to him, and unfortunately one of the top flies hooked itself into this, and of course he broke me at once.

Another fair fish a little over three pounds was added to my basket without any incident worthy of note, and then the rain ceased, and try how I liked, or where I liked, I couldn't touch a fish, and I was not sorry to reach the luncheon tryst and have a spell.

Fish were rising all round us, and more than once during the meal did I have a throw over one or other of them, but devil a bit would they have of it now, though the sport had been merry enough during the rain.

The wind completely dropped also, and in the still water you could see every trout in the river, from the lusty six or eight-pounder to the host of small fry that herded together in the shallows to escape the cannibal attentions of their elder brethren, and everywhere the rise continued right merrily.

With so tantalising a sight no need to say I did not waste time over luncheon, and though I found I could catch plenty of small ones in the shallow water, the big ones would not look at me, though I tried them with every fly in my book.

The thunder kept on muttering away, and at about four o'clock I had a couple of short rises from big fish, and I thought they were going to begin again, but not till after five did I have one come at me as if he meant business.

I had fished the whole of a most beautiful and likely pool without a rise, and on Mike's recommendation threw my fly into the seething torrent that rushed into the head of it, where one would have thought no fish could have possibly lived a moment.

He told me there was a big sod on the far side kept in its place by a submerged rock behind which it was quite on the cards a fish could lie; and sure enough he was right, for a big fellow came at my fly like a tiger as it was swept past his stronghold.

He missed me, but to my delight I saw a swirl in the water that showed me he had gone back again to his friendly sod, so you bet I was not long in giving him another invitation, and this time he suffered for his temerity; for he came at me again, and without any assistance from me at all he hooked himself, and what with the impetus he had got up and the swiftness of the torrent, I don't think I ever felt a more enjoyable rush than he made.

Right down into the centre of the pool he darted like a submarine torpedo, and then only to fling himself far into the air amidst a shower of sparkling spray, and come down into the water again with a whack you could have heard half a mile off; then off again and round the utmost limits of the pool, and then a most determined charge right back up to my feet, giving me all I knew how to reel up in time; then away again, making the reel fairly screech and the line cut the water like a racing yacht with a bone in her teeth, and finally a bore down into the deepest recesses, and a sullen jag, jag, jag on the line as he lay on the bottom recovering himself.

I did not give him much time for this, but with much caution brought pressure to bear on him at once, and he soon commenced to give way bit by bit, till at last after one more despairing run, I had him beat, and as the Maoris would say, "the potato was cooked," and I towed him in with his mouth open and almost out of water.

He was not mine yet though, for like a numskull I missed my gaff and only succeeded in scratching him. This had the effect of reviving him, but marvellous to relate, he headed straight for dry land, and practically stranded himself in the shallow water, where I had simply ingloriously to chuck him out with my hands! An ignoble defeat after so brilliant a fight.

If I had weighed him at once he'd have scaled 5 lbs. easily, but when I got him home I could not

get him more than an ounce less, but anyway a rattling fish.

I fished another pool higher up and extracted a nice three-pounder out of it, and then returned to my sod to see whether another king had stepped into the late one's throne.

To my surprise one had, and with a splendid swirl he went at my fly in exactly the same way as the last one did, and like him missed it, but in this instance he either did not return to his lair or else his first excursion showed him that my fly was but a gay deceiver, as I could not move him again.

Every one of my big fish to-day was killed by a red-tipped Governor; whether he was a dropper or tail fly made no difference; they took him and nothing else.

During the remaining hour of daylight I did not get a rise at *my* flies, though as darkness came on and the bitterns commenced their weird boomings, every fish in the river was rising at *something*, and the water fairly boiled with them. I tried all ways, but was quite unsuccessful, though I fished long after I could see my flies on the water, and I got old Mike to try and tempt them; but no, he did no better than I did, and we could not even foul hook one, though they were so numerous you'd have thought that you couldn't help accomplishing this latter feat! Great heavy fellows just rolled lazily over, showing first their back fin and then their tails, and were for all the world like so many porpoises.

At last I had reluctantly to give it up, go back and yoke up the buggy and drive home, but with a basket of fish that looked real noble when all laid out in a row, and the five big fellows alone weighing over 20 lbs. amongst them would have satisfied most people.

III

A DAY AMONGST THE WAIRARAPA STAGS

BY THE AUTHOR

"WELL, boys, what time shall we set the alarum at for to-morrow morning? You two who are going to the 'Wild Country' have a longish day before you, and you can't afford to be out there after three o'clock in the afternoon, or you'll probably get bushed." So spake our host as we sat round a roaring wood-fire in the homestead, just feeling pleasantly tired after a very successful day's stalking, when an interesting, long and complicated stalk had brought a rattling fourteen-pointer to hand in the morning, and a brilliant sortie against a thirteen-pointer with a magnificent spread had also been crowned with success in the evening.

This latter stag only showed himself outside the bush, just as it was getting too dusk to shoot, but luckily by a stentorian roar or two he attracted our attention to his whereabouts, and in a very few minutes afterwards he found himself shorter by a head.

"Let's say three o'clock, as we have the horses to round up and saddle, and old Larrikin takes a lot of catching if he thinks you are after him at an earlier hour than he considers orthodox for a fair day's work."

"Three o'clock be it, then," says Willie; "and as I suppose you'll expect me to do all the horse-catching I'm off to the downy at once; so, boys, here's Good-night to you and 'More Blood'"; and tossing off his whisky-and-water, Willie retires to his bunk in the adjoining room, and we are not long following suit.

I awoke at 2.10 a.m., and even at that unearthly hour the busy life of a big sheep-station had begun to stir, and I lay awake listening to the hum of conversation of some extra early birds, the barking of one or other of the hundred and fifty dogs that what with rabbits and sheep have been collected about the homestead, *and* for the alarum which I thought would never go off, it seemed so long about it.

It was not therefore surprising to find an ample breakfast ready for us at a quarter to four, and the horses all duly accoutred hung up on the fence awaiting our pleasure. It did not take long to be outside two or three grilled chops, and slinging our rifles over one shoulder, and our glasses and a 'billy' over the other, we sounded the 'Mount' and were well under weigh a good one and a half hours before daylight.

It's astonishing how the genuine station-horse

gets over bad ground in the daylight, but his performance over the same ground in black darkness is little short of miraculous. Ram him along with a slack rein and he'll never put a foot wrong, although he puts the fear of death into you on every available occasion, sometimes by skirting the very narrowest margin of any steep drop (and on these occasions even allowing his hind feet to break away the edge—which, however, does not appear to inconvenience him in the very least)—and at other times by suddenly leaving the indistinct line that dimly marks the recognised track and striking off into space over ground that you are absolutely certain is honey-combed with rabbit holes if it was only light enough to see them; but never mind his vagaries, only let his head alone and he will land you at your destination with the utmost safety and despatch.

We heard an occasional stag roaring as we rode along, and no sooner was it light enough to see, than we saw a fair good beast lying down in a very easily approached grassy corrie.

The frost made it most difficult to use one's glasses, but we could not make him out to be anything wonderful, and after yesterday's sport, having registered a vow to make a jack-pot "Royals or better," we might in this instance have left our stag to fight another day.

However, Willie was very anxious to have a shot with my '303, so he was given the office, and commenced to stalk him, whilst I waited with what

patience I could command to hold the horses and endeavour to keep myself warm.

Willie made a most masterly stalk, but when he got within shot and got a closer view of the stag, which turned out to be a fair Royal, he very good-naturedly decided not to fire, as he thought he might disturb the ground for me, being now in the middle of the very best of it and the morning so still that a shot would have been heard for miles round. Thus commenced what should have been a genuine red-letter day in my shooting journal, but which in reality proved to be a series of ill luck and disappointments throughout instead. After about another hour's riding, during which time we saw only a small ten-pointer that was not worth shooting, we came to the boundary of the famous Wild Country, and tied our lathering hacks up to the top rail of the fence so that they could not tread on their bridles, leaving them standing there with no amusement but sleep to look forward to, and no food beyond the very scant supply left within reach of their heads to occupy their time until we returned to fetch them at night.

It appeared hard lines to me, but I was assured all station-horses were brought up to this custom from the day they were broken in, so there was really no hardship at all about it, and they certainly did not appear to expect any different treatment—"Customs change with climes."

We then became an infantry brigade, and reconnoitred all the likely ground with the most

searching diligence without seeing a beast at all of any moment until about noon, although we swarmed across every difficult gully in the country after roaring stags who, when we got within spying distance of them, proved to be either wretched little knobbers, or else unknown quantities buried in the heart of the bush.

However, about twelve o'clock we found a good stag, and though his hinds were rather straggled, it looked all right for getting in at him; and having completed our plans, away we started.

Just over the ridge of the last spur we looked at him from, two young wild porkers were sleeping within two yards of the end of my telescope—and my word, couldn't they snore!

Our stag was lying under some birch trees at the other side of a ravine, with the river running through it, and as he was in the shade we could not make out his points with any degree of certainty, but that he was big enough for our metal was very evident, and he well merited all the care we could bestow on the encompassing of his downfall.

All went well until we got down to the bush, but it certainly was not a case of "*Facilis descensus Averni*" when we did reach it, and tried to force a passage through it. Every stick was rotten and every leaf as dry as crackling, and the ground so steep that a continuous stream of young avalanches preceded our every footstep, and I am sure no herd of wild elephants could have made more row than we did. But wind was right, and the very steepness

of the ground on both sides, combined with the roar of the river below, acted as efficient protection, and all looked well for a favourable finale.

The ascent was stormed like a veritable Dargai, though I am glad to say old Sol's artillery was a trifle less formidable than the bold Shinwarris, and not a hitch occurred until we were within a hundred yards of where doubtless our antlered friend was still enjoying his siesta.

Then the tide of luck turned, and Dame Misfortune stepped in.

An old red cow that had somehow wandered up into these regions and laid down in the thick bush, suddenly got our wind, and with a resounding snort crashed out close to us, and it was then only a question of who was the most startled—ourselves, the cow, or the deer; but needless to say it was good-bye to the latter, and we heard them making off through the bush as if the old gentleman himself was after them, although the stag showed himself in the open some five or six hundred yards away just long enough to tantalise us with a view of his head, and to allow me to count his *fifteen points*!

The heat previous to this was tremendous, but the language that old red cow brought down on her devoted head positively blistered the grass up, and I hope the archangel Gabriel, or whoever keeps the Recorder's Book, has a special register for sportsmen in similar circumstances.

However, there was plenty of time, and in a country like we were in, where hill succeeds hill in

countless succession, you never know when you may come across deer.

These endless hills, none of which are more than 400 or 500 feet high, are apt to make you a deal more tired than you expect, as you are no sooner up one than you have to go down to the same level again and start afresh at another one almost exactly similar to the last, and most of them are covered in one part or the other with bush which is by no means easy to force your way through.

They are very different to the craggy peaks, shingly slides, and precipitous bluffs of the lone mountain ranges where the South Island deer roam in undisturbed peace and freedom; for in these latter regions, although the mountains run up to 6000 feet, when once you have surmounted 4000 or 5000 feet of them you can sidle along the face at that same level almost until you commence your stalk, and you have also a very much larger field of vision on which to spy for deer. The air of the North Island has not that invigorating freshness about it that the South Island has, though the nights in both localities are cold enough to satisfy a would-be Klondyker.

But "*Revenons à nos moutons*," or should I say "*venaison*"? Both would be right, as luncheon is now the order of the day, and I can assure you a cold grill mutton steak from a station renowned for its fat sheep is not to be treated lightly, especially after breakfasting at 4 a.m. and putting in a good spell of hard exercise between times.

We boiled the billy in the bed of the river and discussed an excellent meal, and I must say billy tea as a lubricant, be the day either hot or cold, beats anything; and a lunch like we had is just as enjoyable and infinitely better for you, than the many-coursed, elaborate banquets with their attendant pomps that one so often gets at big shooting parties far away in the Old Country.

But enjoyable though it was we took very little time over it, as every moment was precious, and we had any amount of first-rate country before us.

We now reached a cleared block that was famous for heavy stags, and Willie pointed out to me different spots where in years gone by many a gallant beast had yielded up those coveted trophies that were at once his glory and his undoing, and specially he showed one wallowing-hole where a real boomer was *missed* only last year. I soon had my glass on a nice-looking stag who was patrolling the edge of the bush some mile and a half away, and we made straight for him.

Wind and country made the approach very easy, and we speedily arrived on the ridge of the spur that commanded his position, and found him not more than two hundred yards away, but now lying down in the scrub and a hind or two posted as sentinels to guard his whereabouts. He had fourteen points and a good head, and we apprehended no difficulty in getting closer to him and having either a lying-down shot or waiting for him to rise; but

just at this moment a beast roared in the bush below us, and his roar was immediately answered by our friend the fourteen-pointer and three other stags, who all *sounded* to be at least twenty-pointers! Two of these latter three were quite invisible, but we picked up the third lying on a tiny bare place in the middle of the scrub and thick bush on the slopes of Mount Eric, and saw at once that he had a magnificent head, with certainly fourteen points at least and presumably more; and altogether an all-round better beast than our near fourteen-pointer. So accordingly the latter was at once put on one side, and all our knowledge of woodcraft was brought to bear on how to circumvent old 'Mount Eric,' as the bigger stag was immediately named.

A long ascent up a very densely bushed gully would bring us out right under his stronghold, and within thirty yards of where he was lying: the wind was fairly right, but would he hear us?

We could see no other way of stalking him or getting to any other place we could sight him from, nor could we discover any hinds, so with a "Let's risk it," away we went.

To start with we had to go down towards our first stag, who tantalised me by offering me a beautiful broadside at a bare hundred yards rise, and if Dame Misfortune had not again been sitting on my shoulders, I should certainly have shot him, on the principle that "a good stag in hand is worth two better ones *in the bush*," but I spared him

and hurried on to the destruction of the "*one* better one in the bush."

However, cruel fate had decreed that I was to burn no powder to-day, and that 'Mount Eric' should still roam unmolested in his fastnesses; where I hope he has founded a family illustrious enough to uphold his looks and pretensions.

The stalk was an absolute success, and in course of time we arrived at the edge of the bush not fifty yards from where he ought to have been. I loaded the '303, and, if the stag had not moved in the meantime, felt as confident of being able to make certain of how many points he had by actually handling them, as if he was already lying at my feet.

I kept the stops on my hammers whilst going through the last yard or two of bush, and just looked down to take them off and cock my rifle when I got through, and it was in this fatal moment that I lost my chance, as the brute jumped up and stood (a beautiful shot, Willie told me) just for this exact second or so, and I only looked up again in time to see his broad buttocks disappearing into the bush.

I rushed after him over the ridge, and found to my surprise that on the other side in one direction it was quite open and bare of bush, with only a few deep gullies running down the face, and if he had retreated this way his fate was still sealed, as I could easily reach the edge of the first gully before he had time to get across it, or be far

enough down the hill in it to be out of shot ; but no—I heard him crashing through a thick bushy gully in the other direction, and he doubtless had gone that way.

There was a cleared space all along the other side of this deep ravine, which was only some hundred yards from me, and to my huge delight he was making his way direct to this spot, and I thought surely my luck had turned.

He was only travelling slowly, but there was no mistake about his track, and you could hear every yard of his progress ; and Willie and I got into our most comfortable positions to open fire directly he showed himself, and between the two of us nothing short of a miracle could avert his doom.

Occasional halts, as if he were listening, made minute succeed minute with exasperating slowness, but still leaves rustling, twigs cracking, and occasional stones clattering, kept one's excitement well up to concert pitch, to the time when one expected every moment that his antlers would appear through the branches ; and when at last we could see the small trees on the edge of the bush actually moving as he pushed his way through them, one found oneself quite on the tiptoe of suppressed excitement, till at last the inevitable arrived, and out on to the most favourable spot for a shot, stepped—not our noble stag, but a lean, lank old grey boar with a back like a razor! a genuine 'Captain Cooker,' who looked old enough and big enough to have been one of the identical ones

Captain Cook himself originally turned out, and to have been growing older and bigger ever since.

In the interests of morality I will draw a curtain over the scene that followed. Suffice to say a very frail hope that our stag *might* have stayed in one of the gullies on the bare face proved futile, and for this year at all events I had seen the last of old 'Mount Eric.'

It being now nearly five o'clock, there was nothing left for us but to stumble away back to where the horses were tied up, and hope to reach more or less civilised country before the now rapidly approaching darkness was upon us.

Fatigue, although unnoticed before, very soon set its seal on both of us ; it always does under similar circumstances, and the only certain cure for it is to have a good heavy head to hump home on one's shoulders !

Nor was our bad luck over for the day, as a deep drop in the fern, that would have been perfectly apparent in the daylight, was unnoticeable in the dark, and brought me down with a rattle, which accident, besides spraining my thumb, tore my rifle cover away and bent the foresight ; and when Willie felt in his belt for his knife to repair damages, he found he also shared my misfortunes, as his old favourite had slipped out of its sheath and was lost !

To finish up with, when at last we did reach the boundary fence, I found old Larrikin had broken his bridle and made tracks for the homestead, and

we had to 'ride and tie' home the best way we could in the soaking rain at a foot's pace.

Surely our cup of misfortune is now full to overflowing; but no—for having been nearly worried to death by savage dogs within coo-ey of the homestead, we eventually arrived there, to find all dark and cheerless and no one to welcome us; everyone was in bed and asleep, as they had long since given up hopes of our return, and expected that we should be bivouacking in the bush for the night; and what was far worse, they had let all the fires go out, and left nothing cooked!

A fitting termination to a most disastrous day!

To add insult to injury, when we had fossicked out a bit of mutton, and cooked it and refreshed our exhausted frames, I found a confounded 'Jackaroo' (Anglicé, 'mud student') who had only arrived from the Old Country to-day, 'dossed' down with his blankets on my bed, as it was the only one available in the homestead! Where the poor devil spent the remainder of the night goodness only knows; all *I* know is that, though Jackaroo took a deal of shifting, there was one man who slept without rocking, and *he* had a most comfortable bed!

IV

THE DEEP POOL IN THE HORORATA

BY F. ROLLETT

DURING the Christmas holiday I went up to Hororata, a little village about thirty-eight miles S.W. of Christchurch, for a quiet week's trout-fishing.

The morning after my arrival was hot and calm, a typical New Zealand December day. I knew there was little chance of having any sport through the heat of the day, but I took my rod and strolled down to the river. The water was clear as crystal, and save where it flowed in rapids over the stones, the tiniest creatures that swam or crawled in its depths could be seen, as though through a sheet of the purest glass.

I made a few casts with a red dragon fly, but the line fell like silver wire on the water and danced idly over the cool stones in the rapids ; I followed it slowly down stream, trampling through beds of perfumed mint or wading through the shallows, but never a fish rose, and no one would imagine that the smallest of trout even existed in the water.

I came to a place where the river entered between perpendicular banks twelve feet high or more, and became simply a long pool through which no current seemed to run. Climbing the bank opposite the sun, I made a slight detour; then, lying down on the grass, I peeped into nearly twenty feet of water. The sight I saw would give an angler dreams for a dozen fishing seasons; there, on the shingle below, motionless almost as the stones their shadow darkened, were hundreds of trout, great stout fellows, six or seven-pounders, ten-pounders, and a shoal of smaller fish; and in the deepest place (a hollow worn by some water flood) lay the king of them all, a noble trout that would scale 15 lbs. if it scaled an ounce.

The wave of his fin-like tail stirred up a small cloud of sand, and the water disturbed by his breathing twisted the cloud into curious eddies. The sunlight, softened by its passage through nearly twenty feet of crystalline water, shone on his delicate scaly armour, on his crimson-spotted sides. The fish were idle as the mint-scented air, and seemed extended on the smooth bottom as if for show.

Stealing back to the shallows, I groped amongst the big stones until, by a knack born of much practice, I managed to secure a nice lively bully (a thick-set, big-headed fish nearly three inches long). He was a beautiful bait, so fat, so rich, so big. I fixed him on the lowest fly hook, and dropping it into the pool played him towards the big trout. I saw him descend slowly through the deep water,

swimming round in narrow circles, making short darts at sudden angles, but working by some strange fatality nearer and nearer to the great trout in the deepest hollow. I watched the fate of the bully with considerable interest, for I guided its course by careful manipulation of the rod.

The big trout gazed at it in calm expectancy. In his lordly mind he expected that plump bully to swim into his mouth, and his expectations might have been realised, only a desperate young larrikin of a trout weighing barely a pound sailed out from a mob of companions and made a dash at the dainty morsel.

There was a huge swirl in the water, sand drove up in clouds from the bottom, the show of noble fish was dispersed, the impudent pounder had mysteriously disappeared, but the king of the pool rested calmly in the hollow and licked his chops in a self-complacent manner, as if his larrikin subject was in process of digestion. The bully still circled round and round in a fascinating manner; but it was the pleasure of the kingly trout to eye him with contemptuous scorn. The courtiers returned to their old positions, and watched affairs with lazy admiration. The bully was offered to the best of them, to the nine-pounder, the eight-pounder, and down as low as a three-pounder, but taking their cue from one bigger than themselves, they treated the bait with disdain. The real circumstances may be concealed as carefully as possible, but it is an undoubted fact that all the trout in that pool

looked on the succulent and handsome bully with unmitigated dislike. I turned from them with an impatient gesture and went home.

The calm of the day dissolved into the brief New Zealand twilight. A soft breeze sprang up from the west, and the boy came with a tinful of fat bullies, for I intended trying the deep pool by night. Again I marched down to the river, rod in hand; not a light flexible fly-caster, but a stout fishing pole with a big wooden reel on which was rolled nearly a hundred yards of strong line. At the end of the line was a length of salmon gut to which was attached Stewart tackle. Fixing the small hook in the lower lip of a bully, I dropped it in the pool just where the river entered it by a short, steep rapid.

The current carried the bully into deep water, and laying the rod down I proceeded to fill my pipe. Whilst thus engaged I heard the reel creek loudly; so dropping knife, pipe and tobacco, I seized the rod and hooked a big fish. He was a strong lusty fellow, and required careful playing. Twice I brought him to the foot of the rapids; twice he dashed back far into deep water; the rod swayed and bent like a whip as the line hissed through my fingers and the reel sang *creek* in a long-drawn note. Again I drew the reluctant fish towards the rapid, saw the white gleam of its body in the water, and was thinking I had caught the fifteen-pounder, when it lashed the surface with its tail and darted away like a streak of light.

My gaff (simply a big fish-hook lashed on the end of a knotty bamboo) was suspended across my shoulders. It required care and patience to release it whilst I played the fish. I waded into the swift water nearly up to my waist, treading carefully lest I stepped into depths that would lose both me and the trout, then I wound in the fish, thinking to gaff him whilst he was yet strong. I drew the butt of the rod back against my shoulder; the fish darted past me, circled round, and flashed out of sight again. He was getting weaker, however, and when brought forward again made a desperate attempt to mount the rapids. His doom was sealed when he reached shallow water; I put a strain on him and gaffed him easily. He weighed 8 lbs. 2 ozs.

Fixing on another bully I sent it down the rapids in the same style as its predecessor. Then I picked up the smoker's necessities that I had dropped in my angler's excitement, and whilst enjoying a satisfactory pipe I had another bite. It was a small fish, not more than one and a half pounds. It rushed up against the stream, dashed amongst the stones in shallow water, and was landed without any trouble.

I fished the rapids for half an hour after that, but got not another bite. Then I scrambled up the steep bank and dropped a fresh bully into the deep water near the haunt of the fifteen-pounder, played it for a while, and was drawing it in to make a fresh cast when there sounded a loud flop, and

by the strong tug I knew I had hooked a big fish. He ran out forty yards of line in one dart, and rose to the surface, made a huge splash, then dived and hugged the bottom like a sodden log. He had swept past me at such a rate that I could not keep a tight line except by running along the bank. Luckily the bank was smooth, a rich swath of short grass, and the pool below me was deep and clear of obstacles as a new canal. Suddenly the thought struck me, How should I land the fish? Between me and the place I had scrambled up from the rapids were three huge bushes overhanging the water. At the lower end of the pool a big willow tree barred me from the shallows. I had nearly a quarter of a mile of clear water to play the fish in, but everywhere the bank appeared to go sheer down to it; it had grown quite dark and perfectly calm, so I followed along the edge of the bank and struck matches. By their light I saw in one place a ledge, but whether it was simply a strip of weeds supporting a face of sand I could not say, but I thought it extremely probable. The fish was sullen and hugged the bottom, but I kept a heavy strain on him all the time. Finding no other place where I could land him I returned to where I had seen the ledge and dropped a few stones in it. It seemed solid enough, so knowing that the worst consequence would be a long swim and perhaps the loss of fish and tackle, I slipped over the edge of the bank and dropped about six feet; it had seemed nearly

sixteen by the light or the matches. I sat down comfortably and played the fish until it came easily to the surface of the water; then I leant over the ledge, and with the first stroke of the gaff secured the fish and swung him overhead on to the bank. It was comparatively easy to scramble up after it, but alas! in that scramble I overturned the tin of bullies into the pool and lost all the bait.

The fish I had landed was a big jack trout and weighed $11\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Owing to the loss of the bullies I had to give up fishing for the night, but as the three trout I had caught weighed 21 lbs. 2 ozs. I was perfectly satisfied. Since then I and other people have taken numerous trout from the same pool, but the fifteen-pounder still remains, and he and hundreds of his courtiers can be seen basking in the sunshine twenty feet beneath the surface, nearly every hot, calm day.

V

A UNIQUE METHOD OF DUCK SHOOTING

FOR a real good day's 'gunning' I suppose there is nothing in New Zealand to equal a day on Lake Ellesmere with the ducks, and one of the chief features of its enjoyment is the fact that, if not the ducks themselves, at all events their parents and grandparents, have been so harried by the human race ever since they reached maturity, that it takes the most skilful machinations to circumvent them, and never does the old Scotch adage, "the best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley," more systematically prove its veracity, than during the attempted discomfiture of the 'canards sauvages.'

The lake itself is some eighteen miles long by eight miles wide, and at best is only very shallow anywhere, in consequence of which a strong and changing wind has an enormous influence over it, making the water rise and fall to a remarkable extent. Naturally, therefore, a large margin is often left round the edges, and the usefulness of this margin for the particular and unique method

of duck destruction that I propose to demonstrate to you, will shortly be apparent.

The lake is fed by the river Selwyn (one of the best trout streams in New Zealand) and other smaller streams, and empties itself into the sea, its mouth being actually on the sea beach; the water is consequently brackish.

Black swans innumerable and ducks (chiefly grey and shovellers) haunt it in vast numbers, and as its shores are perfectly flat, and the only natural cover on them are rushes which are too small to afford any shelter, it follows that artificial cover is absolutely necessary.

Lake Ellesmere ducks, young and old, are altogether too wary to be deceived by the ordinary scrub blinds, and won't go near them at any price; but a method has been devised that is as neat as it is deadly, and as far as I know is a unique invention and peculiar to this particular lake.

The impedimenta are simple and inexpensive, though of course, as in everything else, good arrangements succeed better than careless ones. Suffice to say that the principal feature is a circular galvanised iron tube, three feet high by three feet in diameter, open at both ends, and called locally a 'cylinder.'

This cylinder is easily rolled down over the muddy margin, and when you reach the spot you have fixed on for your caché, you up-end it and force it down into the mud by screwing it round and

sitting on it, until only about three inches appears above the water. Bale the wet mud out with a tin bucket that you take with you, and then put a circular piece of wood that has been constructed to fit into the cylinder, and that you also have brought with you, into the bottom of it, turn the bucket upside down on this for a seat, and there you are, and you have nothing to do till the decoys do their allotted task.

This process of bailing has to be continually resorted to, as the water encroaches in greater or lesser quantities according to where the cylinder is sunk, sometimes as much as five gallons to the minute having to be baled out, whilst at others she keeps dry the whole time you are out. The leakage depends on the soil, but one gallon to the minute is what you may take as an average.

Waders up to your waist are of course necessary, both for utility and warmth.

A cylinder more than three feet high is objectionable, as when you get out of it to pick up your slain, you find any that have fallen on the lake side of you will very soon take you over your waders to reach them, more especially if there is, as there so often is in the most favourite spots, a strong southerly breeze off the shore, which blows the dead birds still further into deep water.

Better even than a 3-foot cylinder is an 18-inch one; and make up the requisite three feet in depth to cover you by digging an 18-inch hole in the mud beneath the cylinder, using the excavated

mud to form a banquette round the top edge of the cylinder.

A 3-foot hole simply by itself is often used, and is as efficacious as the cylinder, but not so pleasant to dwell in, especially if you intend to make a long stay in it. The excavated mud in this method also forms the requisite wall to keep the water out. These holes, dug by numberless gunners at different times, are terrible traps to the unwary; and when poling about in some two or three feet of water picking up dead ducks or changing your position, unless you carefully feel your way in front of you with a stick, you are fairly certain to suddenly find yourself fathoming one of the holes, and you are of course into some six feet of water at once.

If by any misfortune this fate does overtake you, and you happen to be wearing a watch, you should immediately open it and put it into a pannikin of whisky, as the water of the lake is brackish and will otherwise ruin your watch.

The next important factor in the Ellesmere method, and one that is equally as important as the cylinder, is the 'decoy ducks.'

All sorts and kinds have their advantages and disadvantages, and all sorts are tried. The india-rubber one, *until it gets out of order*, is as near perfection as possible; but as this particular failing generally occurs in about fourteen days, and as expense is usually a weighty consideration this sort of decoy is not often adopted.

Wooden decoys are good, but their heads are very apt to come off, and their weight is much against them, as you cannot do with less than twenty or twenty-five. If you have to carry these say half a mile through water up to your knees to place them, and also to carry them back, as well as all the ducks you have shot, it becomes a Herculean task, and you very soon look about for a more portable decoy.

When you have tried all and sundry, I think that you will find that far the best for all practical purposes are 'tin decoys,' that is, simply ducks cut out of zinc plate and painted to resemble live ones.

Sideways these look like ducks, endways they are invisible. Place them at every sort of angle, and have plenty of them.

Doubtless a thought arises, "How the deuce can one make a thin zinc plate float on its edge?" There are two answers to this, both feasible, though one is infinitely better on a shallow lake like Ellesmere than the other. I give the least recommended method first—and that is to get a lot of thin willow sticks, make a cleft at one end of them and a point at the other, and stick the duck into the cleft and the point into the mud, and the effect is distinctly good. But against this there is a strong objection. The water rises and falls many inches with a wind; therefore at one time your decoys would only show their heads above water, whilst at others the whole plate

would be raised clear above it, and show an inch or two of stick as well !

Needless to say, the most guileless of ducks would never come within a hundred yards of the decoys under either circumstances. But the following is a trick worth ten of the above, and no matter what the exigencies of wind or tide, it never fails.

Get two pieces of wood one inch square by seven feet long, and having mortised them in the centre to form a rectangular cross, put them in the water. On to each of its four points attach a zinc decoy, and the best way to fix these is to leave a small peg under the centre of each decoy when it is being cut out, and insert this peg into a cleft in the end of each point of the cross. Thus each cross will have four decoys belonging to it, all at different angles if required, all looking different ways, and at least one of them will be broadways on to an approaching lot of ducks no matter from which direction they come.

These crosses with their attendant quartettes of decoys will rise and fall most naturally in the roughest weather, and you will find them most killing and satisfactory.

Of course you must anchor each cross in its allotted place, and the best and simplest way to do this is to tie each of them with a short string to sticks you have shoved into the mud. The crosses and anchor sticks must be coloured so as not to show ; but to find a paint that will do this properly and artistically is still an opportunity for some

genius, as nothing yet has been discovered that is quite satisfactory.

The above hints will probably suffice to give one a general idea of the *modus operandi* for a successful attack on Lake Ellesmere wildfowl, and if a would-be shooter takes advantage of them it will pretty well depend on his own prowess what sort of a bag he gets. I recommend a hard-hitting gun, a heavy charge, and No. 4 shot at least.

I might add another hint, although it is very universally known, and that is, if a pair of ducks come round and the sex is discernible (as in Paradise or shovellers), always if possible shoot the duck first, as the drake will very often come round again after his defunct mate, even if you fire at him and miss him. The lady, on the other hand, will seldom display the same solicitude for her good man, and if he falls, will hie her away, apparently rejoicing in her widowhood, till possibly a younger and more attractive suitor woos and wins her. 'Twas ever thus!

One more hint; and that is, if you shoot a duck and it either falls or floats into a patch of weeds, retrieve it at once if you want to see it again, or the eels will immediately pull it down and devour it.

A short descriptive account of a shooting expedition on Lake Ellesmere will probably be more interesting than the foregoing notes; so here goes.

Dramatis personæ.—‘A,’ a local sportsman who has lived within reach of the lake since he was a boy; ‘B,’ an emancipated Yorkshireman.

Let us imagine ourselves on the beach side some seven or eight miles from the hills of Bank's peninsula and ten miles from the nearest house, which in other words is the particular spot that our friends had fixed to meet at the shores of Lake Ellesmere, to wage war against the wildfowl.

No hitch in the arrangements. Sportsmen, guns, tent, and impedimenta in the shape of cylinders, etc., food and drink, all to hand. Time, 2.30 p.m. "How are you, old chap?" having being mutually exchanged, and questions about the journey and the prospects of duck having being asked (though the replies to the latter query were the only ones taken any notice of), an immediate move was made to wolf a few sandwiches, wash them down with a bottle of lager, and then to proceed to business.

The first part of this was to 'set out'—i.e. put the cylinders and decoys in position.

Having rolled two cylinders down to the edge of the lake, they were soon lifted into a Berthon boat that 'A' had already fixed up and floated, and spades, buckets and decoys were also soon aboard.

A Berthon is the most useful for Lake Ellesmere work; its shallow draught allows it to go anywhere, and everything can be kept dry and towed about in it with great facility.

The two cylinders were successfully planted about a hundred yards from the shore and about half a mile apart, each with a small attendant fleet of the zinc decoys fixed to crosses anchored on their lee side, and a bucket and a foot-board inside them,

and then both sportsmen took the Berthon back to shore, luckily striking an old hole in the mud big enough for two on their journey.

A sod wall was at once put round this hole about a foot in height, and the whole of it covered with floating lake weed, as it would possibly be a very useful hiding-place on the morrow.

These preparations had occupied them most of the afternoon, and as dusk approached, they took up positions near an adjacent pool, to try their luck at the evening flight. 'A' managed to down three grey ducks, but 'B,' beyond filling an old Paradise with lead, and hearing him fall squelch into the mud (it was too dark to collect him), registered a blank.

A bank of white clouds on the hill-tops foretold a north-east wind according to 'A,' which if true meant fine weather; and after 'summat to eat,' and a smoke, our friends were soon in the arms of Morpheus.

At five o'clock next morning the irritating buzz of the alarum woke them up, and after the usual hunt for matches in the darkness, a candle was lit, a bit of breakfast cooked, waders pulled on, and 'B's' cylinder was waddled out to, as 'A' had to show him proper mode of procedure.

Between them they baled it out, put the board on the bottom, and having turned the tin bucket with a wooden bottom upside down for a seat, 'B' clambered in.

'A' having seen 'B' safely into his cylinder and

given him parting instructions to be sure and put up every duck as he shot it as a decoy, and to put them on the lee-side of those already placed, and having left him a bundle of sticks for the purpose of fixing them, was just leaving him to return to the shore as the nearest way to his cylinder, when swish, swish, creak, creak, sounded just overhead, and there were a dozen or so swans sailing along well within shot. The opportunity was too tempting, and bang, bang, bang, bang, thundered out the heavily-charged guns on the still morning air, and two of the stately birds came neck and crop over, striking the water with a tremendous splash. But what a commotion these shots did make! Not only did they awake every echo, but apparently all creation as well.

From the body of the lake came a clattering roar, caused by the noise made by hundreds of swans as they beat the water with their wings and feet in rising, in addition to which came from every direction the whirr of wings from countless swarms of duck, and the whole was accompanied by a perfect tumult of protesting squeals from the swamp-hens on the shore.

Taking a couple of sticks from 'B's' bundle, 'A' shouldered the two dead swans to put them up between 'B's' cylinder and the shore, and left him squatted on his bucket, calmly smoking and awaiting events.

It did not take 'A' long to fix up the two swans in a most lifelike manner, one end of a stick up

the inside of their long necks, and the other stuck in the mud, which was here only covered with some few inches of water; but by the time he had finished, the disturbed wildfowl had entirely ceased their clamour, and Nature had again assumed her usual early morning calm.

Across the lake here and there a twinkling light betokened the dwelling of some early-rising farmer, on the shore a dotterel piped querulously, whilst overhead was heard intermittently the grating cry of the stilt; but beyond this all was quiet, excepting the occasional splash which signified that one of the startled mobs of ducks had returned to their early feeding-ground.

Gradually the hills became more clearly defined, and it was evident that before long the sun would appear from behind them to once again commence his arduous though daily climb, and a slight ripple began to steal across the placid bosom of the lake as if to herald his arrival, and see that all Nature was prepared and ready to welcome him.

Whilst 'A' was arranging his cylinder, 'B' got a few shots at either duck 'A' had disturbed, or that came over him in the ordinary morning flight; but the regular 'trade' did not begin until about half an hour after the wind had fairly started—*i.e.* about eight or nine o'clock.

This 'trade' or 'trading' refers to the flight of ducks against the wind, as distinct from the all-round flight, and our cylinders being on the weather shore they of course traded up towards it for shelter.

When the trade set in, shooting from both cylinders became general, and continued more or less regularly all through the day.

'B' at first found himself woefully out of it in judging distance, and had it not been for 'A's' over-night comments on the same, nothing would have persuaded him that there was not something the matter with his cartridges. Time after time did he restrain himself till he was positively certain that the birds were within twenty yards of him, only to find when he bobbed up his head that they were at least fifty or sixty, and that the lightning speed with which they turned down wind when they saw him, afforded him an almost impossible shot. But experience eventually taught him, that as he was squatting under water with his eyes only a few inches above water-level, distances appeared to be very much smaller than they really were.

The strong steady breeze that, having once started, blew all day, brought any ducks that came from its direction at railroad speed past the cylinders, and both gunners found at first that the second files were apt to succumb although the leader had been aimed at; but this fault was also soon remedied, and seldom did a string of ducks pass within reasonable distance of either of the decoys, without leaving at least one of their number to swell the ever-increasing crowd of decoys, and birds luckily favoured both decoys more or less equally, so there was no jealousy at one man getting all the shooting whilst the other got none.

Occasionally duck coming up behind one or the other shooter saw him before he saw them, and the bang, bang at them as they darted down wind had seldom any effect; but that all added to the enjoyment of the day's sport, more especially if 'A' saw the ducks approaching behind 'B's' back or *vice versa*.

About 4 p.m. the wind gradually "sighed itself to rest," and the waters of the lake flowed back and surrounded the mud-hole which, thanks to yesterday's preparations, looked most natural; and the thought seemed to strike both sportsmen simultaneously that the ducks were getting shy of their present decoys, and that a little mutual comparison of notes in the recesses of the mud-hole would be very enjoyable; and so the Berthon was again brought into requisition, and the spoils of each collected and counted.

'A' topped the bag with twenty-five ducks (all grey or shovellers except two Paradise) and three teal, whilst 'B' could only find eighteen ducks and a teal, although he loudly protested that the eels must have eaten at least ten more.

They had certainly taken the heads off two of them that had fallen rather out of his depth, but any others that they may have turned their attention to they had completely devoured. 'B,' however, was made happy by finding the old Paradise he had doused the night before, sticking tail up in the mud, as they wended their way to the mud-hole.

The mud-hole, after all, did not turn out to be very prolific, though 'B' covered himself with glory by stopping two difficult rights and lefts in the most approved fashion, 'A' for his part only killing one bird for four cartridges; and dusk coming on very rapidly, they picked up the few decoys they had anchored, and hurried off to the pool they had visited the previous night for fighting.

Here they were rather lucky, as five ducks and a couple of teal were added to the score, and when the bag was laid out by the tent side and looked over with the help of a candle, it appeared quite respectable, though the two headless birds at the far end of the line rather detracted from the general symmetry.

Next morning a howling nor'-wester was blowing—that hot, scorching wind so prevalent in the Canterbury district, and good-bye to sport whilst it was raging. The lake was as rough as a miniature Atlantic, the cylinders were hopelessly swamped, and though the mud-hole looked as natural and enticing as ever, and both sportsmen went and sat in it for a few hours, they did little good.

They did not expect much, as 'A's' local knowledge told him only too well that the beach was seldom any good at all with the wind in that quarter; so after shooting at a few ducks and killing at an average one in three, our friends decided to go and have a pot at the swamp-hens with rook rifles.

They each armed themselves with a rifle, and

had some rather pretty practice at these wily birds, who know to a nicety the exact distance a 'scatter gun' will carry. But it was only tame sport, and they had soon had enough of it; besides, as two days' shooting was all that had been calculated on, an early start in the afternoon for 'A's' homestead had to be made, so as to get back in time for dinner.

And here let us leave them.

VI

A WILD-CATTLE HUNT

BY H. BUCKLAND

ON all purely pastoral sheep-runs at certain times of the year there is little or nothing to do, and one notable spell from work comes along after the first shearing.

What a feeling of relief must go up when the last 'cobbler'¹ being in the hands of the shearer, the wool-classer or shed manager, as the case may be, roars out for the final time, "Clear the board"! These words have rung through the shed every evening at six o'clock since the first blow was struck, but up till to-day to the tired shearer they only meant a wash, tea, a game of cards, dominoes or draughts, and the dead sound sleep

¹ The 'wool-shed' where all shearing is done has a row of pens ('catching pens,' they are called) in it reaching from one end to the other, each pen holding some twenty-five to thirty sheep. Opposite each of these are two shearers, who draw their sheep one by one out of their pen until the pen is exhausted. Naturally each man tries to pick a sheep that looks easy to shear, so the last one is generally a great ugly brute with matted wool and his fleece full of sand. This fellow is invariably nicknamed the 'Cobbler.'

only to be bought at the price of pure physical exhaustion; now they mean a rest from work altogether, and a cheque to be spent as each may best please, and in less than a couple of hours all hands save cook and musterers will have been paid and have left. The musterers are away with the last shorn mob, and will get their cheques when they return.

It was at the finish of shearing some years past that the writer and two others agreed to make another attempt to get out some of the Blue Mountain wild and partly wild cattle.

Four or five years earlier, about fifty head of young cattle of mixed sexes had been turned out on the Parrot River, where excellent rough feed grew on the river-bed flats. These original fifty, through being left too long unmustered, had picked up with wild cattle higher up the river bed, and had become themselves half wild. Half a dozen unsuccessful attempts to muster and yard them by the station hands completed the mischief, and these station cattle in their semi-wild state were now as bad, or worse, to deal with than genuine wild cattle.

The station, upon recognising its inability to get in its own cattle, caused a reward to be offered of £2 per head for all cattle yarded at the homestead bearing the station brand, and a further reward of £1 per head for all 'clear skins'—i.e. belonging to unbranded genuine wild cattle. This reward had been standing now for a year, and we, in common

with a good many others, had done our best to make a few dollars out of Blue Mountain.

In whatever spirit the enterprise was undertaken—for love of the excitement, or in dead money-making earnest—all hands agreed it was not a game at which to hope to become millionaires, but, if anything like previous expeditions for a similar object, it promised a bit of rare fun. A prosperous storekeeper thirty miles distant had lately bought and turned out on the ground twenty milkers which were intended to act as ‘coachers,’ and by their help he reckoned to yard a mob of *our* station cattle. He was a thoughtful man, too, this storekeeper, for if he after all failed in his expectations and only yarded his own twenty, they would probably be in calf to some wild bull, and certainly would have been well grazed for six months.

The owner of the ‘coachers’ had made his effort in the spring. He went single-handed, and as his story as to what happened varied every time he was under the ‘influence’ (it was only at such times he would speak of the matter!), no man knew the truth, but what we all did know was, that nothing in the world would persuade ‘Tommy’ to make any further attempt to rescue his demoralised twenty.

Our first step was to buy Tommy’s interest in his twenty head, and these were acquired, after much battling, for a ‘tenner.’ Our next move was to secure helpers. We took two of our own stock men, the overseer of an adjoining station, and an

English 'cadet' who had come to the colony to learn sheep-farming.

Behold, then, the seven of us jogging along one perfect morning in early February.

For outfit each man had blankets and a complete change of wear, and we all carried revolvers. These we reckoned might come in handy where the cattle were depastured on the Parrot River, some of which we hoped to muster. A timely broadside might dispose of a bull who would not otherwise be stopped, and whom it would not be safe to allow to escape, lest he should take others with him in his flight.

On the *Upper* Parrot River, seventy-five miles from Blue Mountain, ran many a head of wild cattle. For years the price of these had been ten shillings *per tail*!

It was our intention to tackle the more valuable goods at Parrot River first, and then, whatever our luck there, to camp for ten days or a fortnight on the Upper Parrot, and come back with as many tails as we could get. Great level flats ran for miles up there, ground over which one could go at best pace with little fear of accident, and on the Upper Parrot it was all revolver work. Our horses were the right sort for the work in front of them—they did not know how to fall.

We made our first halt at the Parrot Hotel—a six-roomed, galvanised-iron shanty, thirty miles from Blue Mountain. At such places it is always a feast or a famine; this time it was a feast, and a

regal one! Our shearers and the Blue Mountain boys had joined forces; the visitors, all told, numbered about thirty, and as immediately after shearing time everyone is full of money, and each and all were equally anxious to 'shout' for the whole party, the barman had a right busy time for the whole of the three hours we were there.

Two incidents that occurred during our visit are worth recording. The first one happened in the kitchen (which also did duty for dining-room, drawing-rooms, and bed-rooms). It seems the cook had left this room for a minute to tell the other boys who were outside and in the bar, that our steak and potatoes were ready, when a man arose with that assumption of sobriety that only the drunken can muster, and gravely inquired of the company at large, "Why should we not be kind to dumb animals?" Receiving no definite answer, he, without any warning whatever, seized the whole of our delicious dinner and threw it out of the door to the pack of ravenous collies waiting for their masters, and attracted to the entrance by the savoury smell. Tableau!

The second incident, though not so disastrous, was interesting, and had rather a pathetic ending. In the corner of the above-mentioned comprehensive room, a huge, gaunt Irishman had elected to have a bath (?)—probably his annual one; and with this intent had denuded himself of some of his nether garments and was standing in a half-barrel with about three inches of water in it. To diversify

the monotony of his ablutions he was holding forth in stentorian tones on the writings of Thackeray and Dickens! and I have rarely met a man so conversant with the works of these writers. He had, however, a very unappreciative audience with two exceptions, viz., myself and a gentle-faced old man who was apparently completely fascinated by his fluent oratory, and who listened spellbound for the whole hour that I kept the Irishman on the spout. I must tell the sequel, and then proceed to my cattle. On my return I found my two friends still at the Parrot, the old boy having in the meantime trudged five-and-twenty miles to the nearest 'Road Board Library' to obtain a copy of some of the books on which the Irishman discoursed so fluently. The only edition he could get of either author was the *Old Curiosity Shop*, and on his return to the Parrot, being unable to read himself, he was fairly devouring its contents as read to him by his preceptor. By luck I arrived just at a critical part of the story, and though the old fellow saw me he did not recognise me, so impressed was he in the dénouement, and there was a wild look of fear on his old wrinkled face. I could not hear what was being read, but suddenly the old man sprang to his feet, snatched away the book and flung it through the window, shouting, "He has killed Little Nell, he has—the blanky, blank blank!"—and then down went his face into his hands and he wept like a child!

We made Blue Mountain Homestead that n'ight,

where the boss gave us a great welcome, and was in rare form. He was full of a chap whom he called 'Barney.' Barney could do this, that, and the other—best man he ever saw, and so on—grand man on the hills, or repairing yards. "Why," the boss went on, "he's a perfect wonder at stock. He had two months' wages coming, when he hears of the Upper Parrot cattle. Came and gave me a fiver for an old pepper-box of a revolver and two hundred and fifty cartridges; and by the tails he brought in the other day, he must have killed a beast for nearly every cartridge. You should go and make his acquaintance." So we went over to the men's quarters after supper, to see all old friends, and to meet the wonderful Barney. This gentleman reminded one of a professional horse-trainer. He was of medium size, with clean-shaven face and close-cropped grizzled hair; he had a bright eye that missed very little of anything, and nothing with a humorous side to it, and his hands were fine, though firm, with the blisters caused by the axe-work, before he took to killing cattle, still visible. When he saw me looking at these, his eyes twinkled, and he accounted for them by saying his blood was out of order, but if ever I saw a man in the very pink of health and hardness, it was Master Barney, and I had shrewd suspicions those blisters could some other tales unfold.

We smoked and yarned pretty late, and of course we expected a lot of chaff about the cattle, owing to former failures, and we weren't disappointed!

Barney was the only man who seemed to think we might meet with success, and when we said "Good night" he told us he would be handy to help yard if we had any luck.

Of course we intended to yard any beasts we managed to get in the homestead stockyards, and the ground luckily rather lent itself to our purpose. In front of the yards was a plateau some three thousand acres in extent, bounded on both sides by two impassable ravines, through one of which ran the Parrot River. Some two miles from the homestead these two gorges converged into one another, leaving a narrow though steep neck of sand that was quite passable. From this neck the Parrot opened out into a river bed varying from two hundred yards to two miles across, both sides of it being precipitous and inaccessible. This river bed formed a sort of funnel with the sandy 'pinch' as its outlet, and as its base (some five miles higher up) a huge spur covered with fairly open bush that rejoiced in the name of Smith's Spur. The shingly river bed was covered with flax, tussock, waving toe-toe (or pampas grass, as we call it in England), and great trunks of dead trees.

Our plan was to sweep down Smith's Spur, driving all before us into the river bed, and from thence through the sandy neck out on to the plateau, and any animal once out there we might fairly reckon as being ours.

We first tried sneaking up the river bed at night with the intention of camping on Smith's Spur, and

driving the cattle before us as we came down next morning, but unfortunately the night was dead calm, and we had not proceeded half a mile before the clink of an iron shoe on a loose stone seemed to loose a thousand demons of destruction in the wooded flats, and arouse every head of cattle in the country ; and the brutes once started had the effect of terrifying each other to such an extent that they all became fairly mad with fear, and the night was made hideous with bellowing, the sounds of smashing saplings and the rending tear of larger limbs, as they hurtled through the bush for the open. We stood perfectly still, but we knew it was U.P., and it was with downcast spirits that we listened to the galloping hoofs splashing through the fords, getting fainter and fainter in the distance as they continued their mad career back to Smith's Spur and safety.

This plan was at any rate a failure, and there was nothing for it but to 'give it best' and return to the homestead.

This we did, and after a council of war we agreed that if the thing was to be done at all we must make Smith's by another route, and to do this it was necessary to ride forty miles and camp in an old hut on the Upper Parrot, making Smith's Spur the following morning.

We started to carry out this new scheme the day after our failure, and taking it very easily reached the hut on the Upper Parrot about sundown, boiled the billy, ate half our tucker, and

coiling ourselves up in our blankets, were soon asleep.

It was ten miles to Smith's Spur and a bad track, but at eight o'clock next morning we were standing just within the bush on the point of the Spur. Here we put in ten minutes tightening girths, loading revolvers, and putting new 'crackers' on to our stock whips where necessary. A musterer invariably carries a few of these crackers with him, and he always makes them himself from the fibre of native flax, which lacks creation for that job. A substitute for flax in case of inability to procure it, is generally hair from the mane or tail of your horse.

There is but little danger, speaking broadly, of wild cattle charging or rushing you, so long as they are allowed plenty of sea-room; but when bailed up by dogs, or blocked in their efforts to break away, they become maddened with rage and fear, and are anything but nice to deal with.

Slowly and quietly we took our horses out on to the river bed. Not a living thing was in sight.

So far, so good. We spread over the river bed and rode slowly down stream. I was on the extreme right, and my track took me away from the shingle into a wooded flat, and so we travelled without incident for about two miles.

Accustomed as I was to native bush, I at last involuntarily pulled up my mare to admire the growth around me, which was almost tropical in its luxuriance. Solitary red, white, or black pines, without a branch for sixty feet, shot up as straight

as the proverbial rush, and mighty totaras with gnarled and twisted trunks and giant spread of limb mixed freely with them and all the tangled life of scrub and vine which fringe our native bush.

Edging my mare on to a bank of ferns which reached my knee, I was leaning forward to pluck a slender twig to run through my pipe, when I caught sight of a gleaming eye deep down amongst the ferns. "A planted bullock, by all that's holy!" and I could have touched him with a billiard cue. I am sure I did not give the slightest start, but the beast knew the moment he had been seen, and in another second we had a reproduction, by day, of our night's experience on the Parrot! The contrast between the quiet of the moment past, and the uproar now going on, and which continued during the remainder of the hunt, is indescribable; and though I do not suppose more than fifty head broke cover all told, the crashing and bellowing all round us, and some escaping far behind us, whilst others were an equal distance in front, made it appear as if the whole bush was alive with cattle. It was hopeless to attempt to check the bulls, but still any mob of steers, cows or heifers might be tackled with some chance of success, if they did not split up too much, and so we set to work.

It was a single-handed game; every man picked his lot and went at it.

It should be unnecessary to say that it would be useless to ride at a mob coming directly toward

you, and hope to stop the flying beasts with a cracking whip, and the only plan is to mark your lot coming, edge a bit out of line, and then, as the cattle go past you, close in and wheel or 'slew' them. If you get any 'work' on the cattle in the first hundred yards or so, there is a great promise of ultimate success.

I lost no time in getting into the clear, and my first glance showed me every man at work. Now to look out for something for myself. Two hundred yards down stream a bunch of five heads were pounding towards me; these should have my undivided attention. In a moment I had swung my mare round, head up stream, but keeping her well into the side, so that I might have the beasts on my whip hand. How Bonnie loved the game! Save for the trembling of suppressed excitement, she was as steady as possible, but every nerve and sinew was tense, and she was ready to spring off the mark, when she got the word, like a thunder-bolt! I sat round with my hand on the cantle, just to see I was not taken unawares, whilst the devoted five came rushing blindly on. They passed me exactly as I wished, and when about ten yards ahead and twenty to the right, I gave Bonnie the office, and after them we shot. Luckily they were running in file, and I soon raced level with the leader, and crack, crack, crack, round came the whip on his nose and cheek. For fifty yards not the least effect was produced, then he cocked his head a bit on one side, but still kept

on till he could stand it no longer, and then suddenly he swerved sharp off.

Up to now there had been no risk. Should, however, the four cattle behind the leader keep straight on, it was obvious, if we turned with the leader, we would catch it broadside on, but Bonnie took no risks of that sort. Prop! prop! went her toes grinding into the shingle, and we made no attempt whatever to turn with the beast, if anything turning a little the opposite way. Swish! a great half-grown bull lumbered past, with a vicious side swing of his head, and I thanked my stars I had not been foolhardy, or Bonnie and I would have done very little more cattle-hunting, that day at all events. The other three stuck to the leader, a branded steer, and I let the young bull escape, and gave the quartet my individual attention again. With many a tussle, sometimes in my favour, and sometimes in the beasts', we battled on, and I was just wondering how much more of it Bonnie could stand without falling, when the cattle made a smart turn down stream, on to a high pebbly face. After them scrambled Bonnie, and we all shot in a bunch on to a sandy flat of some six or seven acres, whereon stood Jack Armstrong, our neighbouring overseer, who was rubbing down his nag with a saddle towel, and at the same time keeping his eye on four young cows, the picture of complete exhaustion, that he had rounded up.

The sight seemed to kill the last spark of fight

in my lot, and the whole eight huddled together with streaming mouths and heaving sides.

In another couple of minutes I had loosened Bonnie's girths, shoved the saddle back, given her a rub down, and shaken hands with Jack on our luck.

How we fought our runs over and over again!

During the morning we had all seen something of one another, if only for time sufficient to fling a word of chaff, congratulation, or possibly a shout of warning, but this was the first time we had been able to talk since we had started in the early dawn.

We reckoned that to shift our mob just then would be inadvisable, so Jack stopped with them whilst I walked back, towing the mare, to see how it fared with the others.

Half a mile up stream was a sandy mound. Perching myself on this, I could see the remaining five of our party. Three were too far for me to distinguish clearly what was happening beyond that they were headed down stream, and had stock in front of them; but Forbes, one of our station hands, was nearer, and I could see he was riding slowly along in front of a mob of three, an ugly brute of a bull and two cows, and he was sitting round keeping the whip going in the bull's face. Too done to put on a spurt and catch the horseman, the bull blundered on quite regardless of the whip. Nothing but death or disablement would stop this fellow. I jumped on Bonnie and rode slowly out to meet him. At this time Forbes was about five yards ahead of

the bull, and the two cows, both visibly beaten, were about fifteen yards behind him. I let Forbes and bull go past and then shoved Bonnie on to the shoulder of the leading cow, and started smacking her over the nose with the doubled thong. It did not take much to turn the cows, and back they went at a sort of pumped-out shambling trot. No sooner were they turned than Forbes out with his revolver and shot the bull, and then he came back to help me with my two old ladies, and the two of us took them down to where Jack Armstrong had his mob.

Luck was indeed smiling on us all round, and we were all very jubilant.

After a short spell to let Forbes' nag get his wind, we started down stream with our troubles. They all travelled very kindly at first, so we decided one of the three of us should go back and again try his luck, and we accordingly proceeded to draw lots, but the mob took this opportunity to show a considerable spirit of mutiny consequent on recovering their wind, and having got them more or less in hand, it would have been false policy to allow them to break away through our being short-handed, so we did not carry out our intentions, and the three of us kept together, one behind and one on either wing, and made easy work of it.

I will now return to our cadet, who, by-the-by, was an ex-naval officer. We had assured him beforehand that "no previous experience was necessary," and all he had to do was to stick close

to his work, and to consider nothing lost this side of Smith's Spur.

As ill-luck would have it, he had singled out an enormous white steer as his prey, and I must say he had stuck to him most wonderfully.

Neither of us three had any news of our gallant sailor man, except that when last seen he was going for all he was worth at this aforesaid great white steer, but beyond hazarding a remark as to his whereabouts his proceedings subsequent to disappearing over the horizon were totally unknown. However, as we were negotiating our obstreperous mob over one of the numerous raised flats in the river bed, we had a treat worth seeing, for suddenly out of a hollow on the far side of the river appeared the great white steer, and by the pace he was going and his general appearance, his naval engagement was turning out disastrously for him. Close at his heels was his relentless foe, the sailor man, and the look of dead earnestness on his face under the circumstances was overpoweringly funny. Mr Whitey (the steer) had evidently scored heavily at the last bout, and one could easily see by the desperate way 'Cadetty' was riding, he was determined to get even with his friend, and that very shortly, and his gallant little grey was being 'helped on' in a way that must have fairly astonished him.

Pursuer and pursued, who were both totally oblivious of our presence, still continued their wild career, and headed straight for the river. Unluckily,

they met it just where it had run into a deep pool with a five-foot bank on the taking-off side. However, the pace was too good to pull up or crane, and without a second's hesitation in went Mr Whitey and on the top of him went our gallant sailor and his equally gallant grey. A tremendous splash and a huge ring with a few bubbles on it was all that was seen for some moments, and then up comes Mr Whitey, spouting water out of his nostrils like a whale, shortly afterwards followed by the grey horse, and then, some thirty yards down stream, up came the sailor man, who had swum down stream, under water, for some distance, to avoid too close acquaintance with Mr Whitey on reaching the surface!

Neither of the three were any the worse, but Mr Whitey was completely beaten, and directly he got to the bank he was joined in with our mob, with the fight completely knocked out of him for the time being.

The sailor man and the gallant grey having joined issue, we all lit our pipes and jogged along with our mob.

We shortly afterwards saw our three other mates, half a mile to the left, with what looked like a really good haul. We drew together and found they had seventeen big station steers under good command. Mighty proud were we, as we drew near the sandy pinch leading to the tableland above. The exit from the river bed did not come in view until we were almost on it. What then was

our amazement, on rounding the last wooded point, to see in front of us fifteen cattle or so quietly grazing!

The sight was not at all a pleasant one—our cattle wanted but little incentive to make another bid for freedom. However, we agreed that if we did not flurry the coachers they might take up with ours. Such proved the case; and once on the sandy steep we rushed them up with whip and voice, giving them no time to turn, which is the best way to get cattle over a close place, and shortly afterwards had them safely on to the plateau. Well, now everything looked like making our day's work a real success, and we had nothing to do but drive them across the plateau to where the two wings ran out from the stock yards, as an aid to yarding a mob.

The only way to yard this class of cattle is to jam them at it with all the rush it is possible to get on—

“With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs”—

so when we at last got about two hundred yards off the wings, we started our rush together, yelling like demons, and cracking our whips. Away went the cattle, heading straight for the yards, with the big white steer leading, and the whole mob going at top pace.

“Splendid; keep it up, boys, we have 'em now!” But no; that old devil of a white steer stops dead and lets out an awful puffing snort just as he gets

into the wings, and without a second's hesitation slews sharp round, and the whole mob broke back, through, and over us. We were in pretty close order then, but only three went down, and it was not our limbs but our hearts that were nearly broken ; for with our tired nags there seemed no chance of blocking such a large unruly mob going at best pace with their heads pointed for freedom.

But what had turned them ?

Some ghastly fools of wool-scourers were leaning on the far side of the yards, right opposite the entrance, to see the cattle yarded !

Barney, who had appeared on the scene to try and help us to yard the mob, had seen them, but it was too late to get to them before old Mr Whitey had seen them too, and to think of all our work to count for nothing owing to these chuckleheads ! Barney dashed over to where they were, and though there was little time for conversation, what remarks he did make were apparently very effective, as devil a wool-washer did we get within a hundred yards of during the rest of our stay.

Of course the cattle took the shortest road home, and this was over nasty 'benchy' ground, all against pace-making, but after them we tailed, murder and misery in our hearts. It was full three-quarters of a mile before Barney, whose fresh horse shot out ahead of our tired ones and skipped and dodged the bumps and hollows in a marvellous way, was up to the leader. He was then a good hundred yards in front of us, and no one

saw clearly what happened, but to all it seemed as though Barney was down and the mob over him. At any rate the rush was stopped, or rather steadied, and our old friend Mr Whitey was seen struggling on his back, in company with four others.

Only for a second, though. Up they were and off again as hard as ever, Mr Whitey still in the lead, but going, we were delighted to see, a little groggily, and Barney close alongside him. Again the same mysterious check, and Mr Whitey on his back and three or four others falling over him ; but now it was no longer a mystery but an eye-opener to us, though I believe the trick is common enough in Queensland. As they raced along, Barney, our friend in need, riding close to Mr Whitey, leaned over and got a half turn round on his palm with the hairs of the bullock's tail, and then with a sudden curious sidelong and upward heave, shot him fair over in front of his fellows !

Mr Whitey came to time badly this round. His eyes had a dazed look, and blood was pouring from his mouth as he struggled to his feet. He was clearly a beaten bullock, and this being the case, the others appeared to lose heart entirely, and they allowed themselves to be driven, like a lot of old sheep, right bang back into the yards without any opposition whatever. In they dashed, up went the rails, which were duly wired in their places, and our work was done !

Next thing was to chuck ourselves off our dead-

beat steeds, loosen their girths, and drop the bits out of the horses' mouths, and then one and all started in to thank Barney, to whose prowess alone we had to attribute our final success. He was very modest about what he had done, but seemed very pleased at our gratitude, and asked us when we were going to tackle the higher country for tails? On telling him we reckoned our work owed us two days' rest, he said, "You're dashed good chaps, and I'll risk it and put them in with you," which pleased us all muchly, though what risk there was in staying did not appear to strike any one at the time.

We looked over our prizes next morning, and rare proud we all were at such a big haul—thirty-three head in all, and only ten without brands on them.

The brutes did not look a bit the worse for their day's exercise, and I am glad to say neither were our horses, and 'Cadetty' said he'd never enjoyed a day so much!

We had a right good two days, and Barney's experiences and his rollicking way of telling stories made him a prime favourite with everyone, and we pressed him hard to come after the tails with us; but he only smiled and said that now he'd got his cheque for the last lot from the boss, he must be off down-country, and couldn't spare the time.

On the evening of our last day, the packman from the Blue Mountain musterers' camp came in unexpectedly, and told us the musterers proposed

to take advantage of a fine moonlight night and come in that evening, instead of waiting for the next day, so that they would get a chance of seeing their mates after the great cattle-hunt.

I happened to be close to Barney when this news was brought in, and noticed him start, and was rather surprised to see him go up to the packman and say, "Holloa, Pete, who'd have thought of seeing you here? Here's that note I owe you," at the same time pressing a pound-note into his rather dubiously held out hand, and giving him a mysterious look. The packman pocketed the note, but with rather a puzzled expression on his face, and we commenced to rally Barney and say he'd been over-generous with his note, as Pete had evidently forgotten all about it. But on hearing the name 'Barney,' Pete seemed to tumble to it, and the puzzled expression gave place to an intensely amused one, and everything again went merry as a marriage-bell.

Nevertheless Barney seemed restless, and on the dogs barking outside he took advantage of it to leave the hut, to come back again in five minutes to tell us that the boss wished him to go down at once, if possible, about some cattle that he wanted him to buy the very next day.

It struck me as funny, but the others seemed satisfied; and on going out with Barney to help him saddle up, I, out of curiosity, went to see the boss, but found he had just gone to bed, evidently having turned in immediately after settling with

Barney. So away went Barney, carrying everyone's best of wishes and regrets that they were losing such a prince amongst sportsmen, and he sung out as he started—"Well, boys, I'm glad we've met, and I'll try and keep you all in mind, and I am sure none of you will ever forget *me*"¹; and trolled out in his rich musical voice as he rode off:—

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones
every stride.

The man that holds his own is good enough.
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their
home

Where the river runs those giant hills between:
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to
roam,

But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

I was really very sorry to lose him, as he was a rattling fellow, and of a sort very seldom met.

Hardly had we got back into the hut when the dogs started barking again, and we heard far away 'coo-eyes' echoing through the night, and in a very few minutes in galloped the musterers, all dying to finger their shearing cheques.

They congratulated us most genuinely on our splendid take, though they might well have been a bit sore that the exigencies of their calling did not allow them to participate in our success; but when they heard what we proposed to do on the morrow,

¹ This sentence bore a significance we did not realise till later!

they one and all exploded into such roars of laughter that some of our boys began to show a bit of temper. However, when at last they could speak intelligibly, they shouted out, "Why, a chap called Barney had been up there by himself, and all the blooming cattle were now 'bobtailed'!"

And sure enough it was so, for Master Barney when he went up there with his revolver and two hundred and fifty cartridges had only taken it with him as a blind, and he had saved all trouble and bother of killing the beasts to get their ten shillings' worth of tail, by simply tailing them as he had done Mr Whitey, and at the same time cutting the tails off! No wonder his hands were blistered! Good old Barney!

VII

WITH WILDFOWL, TROUT, AND WILD CATTLE ROUND LAKE MANAPOURI

BY R. CHAMBERLAIN

"'Midst the glorious lakes with the reeds and rushes,
Where the hills are clothed with a purple haze,
Where the bell-birds chime and the songs of thrushes
Make music sweet in the jungle maze."

—PATERSON.

THE 'Gazette' having notified all whom it may concern that the shooting season for native game would commence on Monday, 2nd May, I greased my shooting boots, got together my camp equipage, and looked up my old twelve-bore shooting-iron, which (like its owner), though it has seen its best days, may still be depended on for a day's hard work, if required.

I left Dunedin on a fine cold morning in April by the 9.5 *express* (?), reaching Lumsden—137 miles—at 4.30 p.m., so it will be observed that in New Zealand trains the pace does not take away one's breath. But the rigours of the passage being

mitigated by tobacco, a novel, and a hot dinner in the middle of the day, I did not suffer much.

At Lumsden I stayed the night, taking coach before daylight next day for Lake Manapouri.

In the summer, when tourists are plentiful and strong on the wing, they roll magnificently out of Lumsden in a five-horse 'Cobb's Coach,' a leathern conveniency painted bright red, hung on leather thoroughbraces, and constructed solely with a view to strength—that is, to jolt and lumber through two-foot ruts, and river beds full of big boulders, and to carry as much weight, human or dead, as can hang or be tied on every available space. But in winter this gorgeous vehicle is laid up, and the humble open 'trap' brought out, drawn by two horses. In snow or very bad weather Her Majesty's mails sometimes even travel on a pack-horse, with a boy riding alongside.

I got on well as far as the junction of the Manapouri and Te Anau roads ; the coach, or what does duty for it, goes through to the latter place, and a branch trap from Manapouri meets it, or should do so. Unfortunately, at the meeting-place I found instead of a trap a small boy with a very bony old white horse waiting for the mails, so the letter announcing my coming had evidently miscarried. This was cheerful, especially as just then a cold wind and rain came up ; but I had started to go to Manapouri, and meant to get there somehow.

A tip to the boy induced him to walk back ; so with the help of a couple of sacks and the handy flax

bush (N.Z. *Phormium tenax*) I got the mails, my gun-case, and other baggage safely slung on the Gothic steed, and after a twelve-mile tramp and fording one or two rather deep and *very* cold streams, I reached my destination about seven o'clock, wet, exceedingly hungry, but not so cross as I expected. These little incidents often happen to the up-country traveller in New Zealand.

Next day, Sunday, was very fine, and my friend M—— rode in from his station, a few miles off, in great style, with his traps on a pack-horse, and a shepherd to take the horse back.

The ostentatious luxury of these 'social pests' to the squatters is most offensive (unless one can share it).

We turned in early, having got everything ready to start for our shoot next morning, which we did in a thick fog, but the lake was smooth as glass, and prospects good. We had a fair-sized boat, with oars and sails, 6×8 tent, blankets, cooking utensils, and a full 'tucker box'; also a knowing old retriever, used to the lake, and, last but not least, a capital fellow to do our cooking and other odd jobs. He pulled a good oar, was cheerful and obliging, and generally a handy man, with a great fondness for sport.

We had decided to first try and get some of the wild cattle that frequent one arm of the lake, so put our rifles in the boat. I find a Snider carbine (which, being of obsolete pattern, can be bought for a pound from the Government store), fitted with the

'Yankee Lyman' sights, a very handy gun in the bush, and the big bore, '577, gives it good stopping powers—if it hits anything! However, it didn't stop anything on this occasion. We paddled carefully in the dim light and fog to the cattle ground, landed, and crept up a little creek and through the scrub to a small open flat in the bush. Peeping through the flax and toe-toe, I saw a young heifer, apparently meditating, head down and tail swaying to and fro, about eighty yards from the edge of the bush. She had her starboard quarter, so to speak, towards me, and I crept back into the scrub to try and get a nearer and better shot. I was very careful, but when I caught sight of her again she was evidently alarmed, head well up, eyes and nostrils wide, and looking out for squalls. I dropped into Hythe position (kneeling, as learned in 1858—just Heaven! forty years ago!), sighted through the tall rushes at where I thought the shoulder-blade should be (I could only see the head and ridge of the spine), and just as she started to go I let fly. The effect was marked and instantaneous. The heifer—still to carry out the nautical simile—hoisted her peak and scudded, at the rate of about a mile a minute; she was out of sight in the bush before I could get in another cartridge, and I heard her crashing through the scrub and bellowing like a fog-horn. I made my best pace after her, but it was hard work; and although her tracks were plain enough to follow, struggling through thick bush, over logs, and round mud

puddles of unknown depth soon became tiresome, and when I gave it up, at the end of a mile or so, she was still going strong, evidently in a great hurry, and apparently likely to reach the west coast before sundown. I am sure I didn't miss that beast—I *couldn't* do it, and why she did not fall down dead when I pulled the trigger really puzzles me. But I derived some comfort from a camp-fire yarn told the same night—the narrator, a most respectable and virtuous man, having fired *fourteen* Snider bullets into a bush bull, who would have walked off comfortably, though quite full of lead, if he had not been prevented by the fifteenth shot, which broke his leg.

Somewhat discouraged by my want of success, I sat down, had a smoke, and sought consolation in the beauties of Nature ; and certainly any man who could not have found it in these surroundings must have had a soul dead to all æsthetic sense. The fog by this time was lifting, and the tops of the snow-covered mountains began to show all around ; the sun broke through and lighted up bush-covered slopes and bare precipitous peaks, while here and there, on the waters of the lake, which were as smooth as a mirror, appeared the most lovely little islands and promontories, bush-clad to their very edges. The waters were so clear and dark, that every detail of the scene from which the mist floated away was pictured in the lake as plain to see as the reality above it, and, like the swans in sweet St Mary's Lake, floated double, swan and

shadow—only the Manapouri swans were black instead of white.

The reflections quite realised those American lake photographs which puzzle the beholder as to which side should be uppermost, the reflection and the reality being so alike. I used to think these photos were 'faked,' but a view of Manapouri on an absolutely windless day convinced me to the contrary.

We poked about the bush unsuccessfully until towards afternoon, sometimes hearing cattle close by in the scrub—once I was within six feet of one, which got up and left on urgent business, evidently winding me, as neither of us saw the other; but never another shot did we get that day. As we wanted lunch and had to pitch camp, we got into our boat and pulled back into the lake, where we selected a lovely camping-ground, a smooth, white sandy beach, sixty yards long, backed by thick forest, open to the sunny north, and with rocky bush-covered promontories sheltering it at each end. It was an ideal camp: wood and water at our door, a fine rock for fireplace, perfect shelter at the back, and facing north the finest view imaginable—foreground white beach and blue lake, wooded islands in the middle distance, and the broken mass of Cathedral Peaks, with their fretwork of gullies delicately picked out in snow, towering up at the back.

We finished the day by taking the boat round the shores of the lake away from the cattle ground,

looking for duck, but without success. A few grey were sighted, but they were off before we could get within a hundred yards of them. Accordingly we returned to the camp fire, tea, and tobacco, turning in soon after dark, say 7 p.m. Next day we turned out again about four, and reached the cattle grounds before daylight. Again we were unsuccessful, but we *nearly* did well. We had silently and carefully explored an open flax paddock, a 'pakihi,' as the Maoris call it, which drew blank; and some time after, returning towards it through the bush, my mates some yards ahead of me, I heard two rifle-shots, followed by much tearing and crashing of flax leaves and branches, and then an ominous silence. I found my mates, who had walked carelessly out into the open, had nearly tumbled over two beasts, who in a second disappeared in the flax and scrub, followed by two bullets. Each man was sure he had bagged his beast (as sure as I had been the day before), and confidently walked into the bush to pick him up; but the further we walked the more we did not pick him up—either of him. After this I felt easier about my performance of yesterday.

We then gave up cattle and decided to devote ourselves to the ducks, so we put away the rifles and got out the double-barrels. While after the cattle we had come to a small lagoon of perhaps ten or twelve acres, covered with birds, mostly greys, teal both black and red, a few Paradise, and one or two black swans.

They had probably seen or heard us, and bunched a good deal in the middle of the lake; and as there was no shelter within shot of them, we boldly pulled up the creek into the lagoon, leaving one man 'planted' at the entrance to get a chance at them as they flew over; then another man rowed very gently towards the birds, while the third sat in the boat with a couple of charges of No. 4 all ready. Off went the Paradise far out of shot, off went most of the greys soon after, to reckon with the watcher at the entrance. But a couple of barrels at long range into the last 'mob' of greys, just as they were rising, brought down two of them, and frightened all the rest clean away.

All this time we had heard banging going on at the mouth of the creek, and when it ceased we took a spell and waited for the teal to show up again. They are not so wild as the greys, and dive and hide rather than fly away. As soon as a mob had collected, we got a right and left at them and bagged three, after an exciting chase with a cripple who kept diving and finally took another barrel to bring him to book.

Then we picked up our planted friend from the creek and cruised round the lagoon, and so back into the lake, picking up one or two stragglers that had remained hiding in the thick rushes, and a few more on the lake.

But recovering our birds, unless killed absolutely dead, was a very difficult matter: the little creatures would dive and hide in the most marvel-

lous manner, and were not only hard to catch, but harder still to see, if once lost sight of near cover.

However, we returned to camp with a fair bag, early in the evening, leaving ourselves just light enough to collect a supply of wood for the fire. Again we turned in very early, and rose before daylight next day and got a shot or two at the greys through the mists of early morn; but as soon as they were disturbed they cleared off and we saw no more of them.

The day turned out as fine as its predecessors, and we wandered at large about the lake, getting a shot here and there, picking up a bird now and then in sequestered bays and nooks where they had not been disturbed, and making our fire when we felt disposed for lunch or tea, and occasionally going up a tempting bush-covered hill for a shot at a pigeon or kaka, or exploring a deep and cold ravine on the look-out for a blue duck.

Next day we 'slept in' until daylight, and after breakfast struck camp, packed everything into the boat, and pulled away across the glassy lake to the north. Our destination was the Waiau River, at its inflow into the lake, but we took various promising bays and lagoons on the way, getting a shot here and there. On a small lagoon in the thick bush I found a pair of black swans. They are too wild to approach on the open lake, though they are plentiful enough, but after some manœuvring I got a shot and bagged what appeared to be a male cygnet. My friends and

the dog were out of call, so I had to fish my game out of the water myself, which was a long and sloppy job; then I slung him over my shoulder by his long neck, and started back for the boat. When I first picked him up, I estimated his weight at 30 to 40 lbs. ; when I had struggled and sweated for a mile through the bush, with him on my back, I was prepared to swear he weighed not any less than five hundredweight. His last end was peculiarly sad. I sent him—carriage paid, be it remembered—to Mr B——, the manager of the Dunedin Club, and on my return home questioned that gentleman as to how the bird turned out. He was markedly reticent, but severe cross-examination revealed the fact that the cook had mutinied, said that though she could stand a good many things she must draw the line at black swan—it was a great deal of trouble to cook, and was no good whatever when cooked. So the poor corpse was buried in the garden, unwept, unhonoured, and uneaten.

We visited another small lagoon on our way home at the foot of a huge precipice. It was surrounded on all sides by dense bush, the entrance being by a narrow muddy creek, a hundred yards long, and just wide enough for the oars. This lagoon was fairly covered with wildfowl, and at the first alarm they swam into the centre, out of shot from any cover. M—— and I therefore landed, one on each side of the creek, and sent our boatman to pull gently round the mob and try to

drive them towards us ; they were very wild, but the greys rose almost directly, and came streaming out over us, flying like rockets down the wind. There must have been over a hundred of them, but we only got off our two barrels each, and long before we could reload the last straggler was out of sight over the trees. The Paradise broke in another direction and never came within shot. Our boat came back and picked up the dead ; then we hunted the lagoon round for teal, put up two or three bunches, and well-nigh exterminated them.

Next day we returned to our hostelry, and decided to have some pot-shooting at the Paradise ducks on the stubble on the following day ; so set off in good time, in a curious trap—I may truly say a rattletrap, drawn by three horses of various ages, sizes, and degrees of angularity. Track there was none, but we bumped gaily along, over pretty rough going, and reached our destination, a sheep-station on the Waiau River, about lunch-time, and started the campaign against the ducks. Hundreds of them were scattered in mobs, large and small, about the oat stubble, of which there was a considerable extent, but they would not allow us to come within about half a mile. We therefore built up some shelters of manuka branches, and made them look as much like a clump of manuka as our artistic instincts could compass. This took us until nearly dusk. The ducks, which had been scared off by the bustle, gradually came back for supper, so we were fortunately able to get a brace or so for decoys.

Next day we were inside our shelters before daylight, our decoys artfully propped up with twigs, to look as if they were enjoying a hearty breakfast. Soon we heard the 'cronk, cronk' and rush of wings, but the birds were shy of the shelters and did not settle freely; however, we got a shot or two, and were able to moor quite a respectable fleet of decoys off our stations by breakfast-time.

When we turned out again it was blowing, and rain began to fall; however, we manfully stuck to our guns all the forenoon. I had a candle-box to sit on, a waterproof coat, a book, and lots of tobacco; but the birds were shy, and I only got five until near lunch-time, so I concluded to give it up, as I was getting wet and very cold. Just as I was about to step out of the shelter, I gave the usual half-instinctive look round, and saw a big mob of Paradise come 'cronking' down towards me. I darted back inside, and had a couple of cartridges ready just as they dropped all round. There were several well within shot, so I waited until a couple of heads came into line and bowled them both over dead; then as they rose, I fired at a big drake, and to my delight, when he dropped, another fell just beyond him.

The afternoon turned out too cold and wet for the decoy shooting, so we strolled down the river, towards which the ducks had gone when shot at in the morning; but we had no luck. We saw

hundreds of birds, but there was no cover in the river bed, and we did not get a shot.

In the evening it was suggested that by way of wind-up to my visit (I was to return to civilisation next day) we should try a little eel-spearing, or rather gaffing, by torchlight. Accordingly, about nine o'clock three of us took boat on the river, which is there very deep, about eighty to a hundred yards wide, and rather rapid. The shallows are obstructed by snags, fallen trees, and all sorts of impediments, so netting is out of the question, and none of the fish in this river seem to take any bait.

One man pulled, one leaned over the bows and stared into the dark water, gaff in hand, waiting for his prey, while a third carried a huge flaming torch, built of sacking, saturated with grease, fat, and just a 'suggestion' of kerosene to help it along, wrapped round a stout eight-foot pole. This he held so as to throw a good light ahead and around the bows of the boat.

We dropped slowly down stream and got a few big eels, when suddenly we saw a huge grey shadow glide slowly out of the black water into the circle of light. The gaff man gave a deep gasp of excitement, the shadow slowly 'ported his hellum' and disappeared. Our excitement rose once more, when we saw him heading towards us again, having come round on the other tack. He had a deliberate look at us, turned his side slowly to the light, and as he was sheering off for the last time the man with the gaff hardened his heart,

dashed his gaff into the monster, and in a moment we were in the midst of a Titanic struggle. For some time it was doubtful whether the man would get the fish into the boat, or the fish would take the man overboard. I was holding the torch and could do nothing; but grasping the fact that the fish had the best of it, and that the situation was getting acute, I dropped the torch, which spluttered out in a second, leaving us in a blackness which might be felt, seized the gaff-man by what I believe sailors call the slack of his bags, and pulled for all I was worth. The extra twelve stone told on the fish; he gave in with a jerk, and all three of us sat down, with emphasis, in four inches of eels and water, but in the boat! We picked ourselves up, pretty well sodden, and then the fish had his turn. He leapt and splashed and bounded about with such vigour and *abandon*, that he galvanised the half-dead eels into renewed vitality; and before he could be prevailed upon (with a boat's stretcher) to stop, he had splashed us all until we were as wet as himself with muddy water. Cold, wet and dirty, but much excited, we pulled up stream, got to the hut and examined our prize. He was a magnificent trout, one of the finest I have ever seen, and in prime condition—not one of your lean, lanky cannibals with jaws like an alligator's, but a deep, thick-shouldered fish, clean built, with small head, fine scales and very few spots, his sides a lovely silver, and (this we found after) firm pink flesh, rich

and curdy like a salmon. He was twenty-six inches from snout to root of tail, thirty inches over all, twenty-three inches round the waist (rather more than the average girl), and he weighed twenty-five pounds. In each case the figures run rather over what I have stated, but I knocked off the fractions, to save exaggeration.

Now, this is not a fish story, but a perfectly true fact, and I much regret that I had to leave Manapouri before this trout was all eaten.

VIII

THE BEST DAY'S PIG-HUNTING I EVER HAD

'PIG-HUNTING' in New Zealand may not be a very picturesque sport, but for a rough-and-tumble bit of excitement, when the stomach is empty and crying out for fresh meat to which it has long been a stranger, and the prize in view is a fat, juicy porker, I know of nothing more exciting. There is the prospect, or at least the hope, of a good 'square feed,' combined with the excitement of the chase, and just a sufficient element of danger added to give a relish to the sport. Under such circumstances man reverts back to the savage instincts of his prehistoric ancestors, and throws himself into the hunt with a reckless disregard of all danger to life and limb, scrambling through the thick undergrowth, up and down hill, coming many a cropper over the steep rocky bank of a stream, or down a waterfall, but forgetting everything in the one frantic desire to gratify that insatiable craving that all Britishers are credited with possessing, 'to kill something'; and he is really not much less savage

at the moment than the pig he is hunting, except that the man's actions are guided by a superior intelligence, and his thoughts are expressed in more or less luminous nineteenth-century language, whilst the pig has only his wild brute sagacity and the benefit of a perfect knowledge of the intricacies of the well-nigh impassable jungle in which he has been born and bred, to defend himself with. All the same, it must be borne in mind that whilst the former is only hunting for his dinner, the latter is hunted for his life, which puts a different complexion on the end to be attained.

The day I am about to describe is only one of many similar days I have enjoyed, but it is most firmly fixed in my mind, owing to its more than usually wild and romantic surroundings, and the fact that the hunt resulted in the largest 'bag' which my experience records, and enabled me to add to my collection two of the finest pairs of tusks I have yet found. Nevertheless there still lingers a bitter twinge of regret over it, as it cost the life of one of the most gallant 'Gelerts' (though he was but a half-bred mongrel 'pig-dog') that I ever came across; and I often recall, even after all these years, the mute, almost human, look of appeal that his eyes expressed, as having hastily bound up the cruel rip in his flank that no one better than himself knew must prove fatal, we dashed on in "the merry chase that went heedless sweeping by" to the dénouement that times out of number he had played the principal part in, and left him, after vainly trying

to drag himself after us, to gasp out his final struggles with death in that lonesome spot where no sound reached him save the far-distant shouts of his well-beloved master (whom if he had been in similar straits *he* would never have forsaken), and the hoarse bays of his erstwhile companions.

But to my story.

Some years ago I was engaged on a 'trig survey' of a portion of the Urewera country, a very rough, inaccessible, and little-known district covered almost entirely with dense birch forest.

My party included, besides myself, three Maories and one white man (at least he was fairly white, considering that he had been all through the Maori war, and had lived amongst the natives ever since); but as he was an incomparable pig-hunter I could forgive him for not worrying much over his morning tub.

Of course the dogs form a very important item of the equipment of every surveyor, prospector, or others whose business takes them far back from civilisation.

We had originally started with five dogs, but one got badly ripped and died, and another got lost, so we had only three left, just ordinary mongrels like most pig-dogs, with the collie breed predominating, but they were well trained, especially old Ben's (the white man).

Well, we were descending the upper waters of the Ruakituri River, which empties out at Hawke's Bay, though our progress was painfully slow and

arduous, as the country was very rough, and waterfalls which had to be got down or circumvented were frequent, when about mid-day we struck a large extent of open fern country, and soon the fun began.

Our lean, gaunt-looking dogs seemed, like ourselves, to be endowed with fresh life at sight of open country after the gloomy bush, and immediately dashed off in skirmishing order to pick up a scent; and they very soon succeeded in doing so, as we found out before the day was over that the whole country was fairly alive with pigs.

In a very short space of time a baying bark from one of the dogs down in the river a few chains below us, told us a pig of sorts had been 'bailed up'; and the whole party of us, throwing down everything we were carrying then and there as though we never wanted them again, rushed down towards the sound. Almost immediately, however, came more furious barking further down the river, so sending one of the Maories down to despatch No. 1, which we intuitively judged to be only a small one, the rest of us made off to where the other dogs could be heard giving tongue in a manner which told us, as plain as words, that they had 'stuck up' a boar. This proved to be the case, for when we arrived on the scene there he was, black as night, a real handsome old 'Captain Cook,' with his back to the rocks, looking about as murderous as he well could do, and making short quick rushes at the two dogs.

I mentally resolved to have his fine white tusks at any cost, and, to make more certain of them, told the men to leave him alone till the third dog came along. After a minute or two's wait, however, it got too much for Ben, who was positively thirsting for gore, and like a flash he darted in and got hold of a hind foot, which was the signal for Ben's old dog 'Mike,' the hero of a hundred fights, to also dash in and seize the boar by the ear at the same moment.

Thus encouraged, the other dogs also closed and froze on to the other ear, taking care to press themselves as close as possible into the boar's body to escape the dreaded tusks, and of course we also immediately joined in the fray, and for a moment or two it was almost impossible to tell which was uppermost—pig, dogs, or men; and what with the shouts of the men, the hoarse growls of the dogs, the savage screams of the pig, and the crashing of the surrounding bush, a veritable Hades appeared to have been let loose, and dust, hair, blood, and steam was flying in every direction.

The shield with which a boar's neck and shoulders is covered is exceedingly tough, and sometimes over an inch thick, and is almost invulnerable to a knife in a dismounted man's hand; and time after time did our knives glance off this, or bury themselves up to the hilt in one of the many spots in a pig's body that are not vital, before Ben's keen blade at last found the bull's-eye, and with one last despairing yell, ending in a faint,

withering, choking gasp, he yielded up the ghost, and the struggle was over.

I cut out his lower jaw—which took eventually many hours' boiling before I could pull the tusks out—and then had a few tit-bits cut off for the dogs.

The shield I have just mentioned, though it will sometimes turn even a rifle bullet, and make the spear of a horseman glint off, is, when thoroughly well boiled, very good eating indeed, although it may appear strange to say so; and though it is very glutinous, I never knew anyone yet who did not prefer it to any other part, after he had once given it a trial.

When the dogs had been fed sufficiently—that is, enough to make them long for more, as it was too early in the day to let them gorge—I sent two natives back for the 'swags' we had dropped half a mile back, with instructions to carry everything a mile or two down stream, and pitch a temporary camp, and to see they got a good supply of firewood, as we expected to have cooking on a large scale that night. And now Nieta, the man I had despatched after the first pig, and his dog arrived. He said he had killed his pig No. 1, but described it as a 'whiriwhiri,' and not worth bringing along, so our first surmises were correct as to its size. It was only 10 a.m., and with my two best men and three dogs I had the rest of the day free for sport.

We left the river, as the noise of the rushing water made it difficult to hear the dogs barking,

and took up towards the range on the south side. The day was hot, and it was hard work going through the high dense fern, the narrow pig-track not assisting us much, as, like all such tracks, it was merely a tunnel under the fern, the height of a pig.

After half an hour of this, during which time we had made perhaps a quarter of a mile, we paused to get breath, and now those confounded dogs were nowhere to be seen or heard; they were too energetic and eager after their long fast, and in consequence had roamed too far afield.

There was nothing for it but to lie down in the shade and smoke a pipe, and the hour or so we had to wait was very acceptable, and did not seem long under the soothing influence of that great comfort, tobacco.

At last up came the dogs, panting like steam-engines and tongues lolling out by yards, and I don't know how many miles they may have travelled, or how much sport they had spoiled since we saw them last, but that they had killed something was evident from the blood on their chops. However, off we went again across country parallel to the river, the fern getting lighter and more open ahead of us, till suddenly Ben, who had ears sharp as needles, heard a grunting and squealing in front, and at the bottom of a small gully, half-obsured by the high fern, we could see what appeared to be several families of half-grown pigs, with their mammas, rooting about in search of fern

root and worms, all as 'happy as Larry' and fat as butter, and what consternation there was amongst them when our savage mongrels flew into their midst!

I burst through the detaining fern to the open patch of ground, and fell fair over a dog and pig that were rolling together on the ground, but I was up in an instant, and very soon had hold of piggy's hind leg, and buried my nine inches of cold steel into his heart at the first attempt. He was a real little beauty, and the only one out of that whole lot that we got, as the dogs only worried the others and rushed from one to the other instead of holding on to one, and very speedily all of them disappeared into the thick bush. That, however, made No. 3; and while singeing him over a fire of dry fern, the dogs, frantic at losing so much fat pork, were flying around in all directions, and started up what soon became No. 4.

This was a sow in excellent condition, and she came down hill, with two dogs behind and gallant old Mike hanging on to her left ear, like a demon, into our arms.

Her shrift was very short, as she almost immediately found herself lying on her back alongside the lately-deceased porker, and squealing her life out with a knife-blade through her ribs. The singeing and cleansing of these two pigs occupied the men nearly an hour, and then Nieta put his swag straps round the two, wriggled into the slings, and

with a grunt staggered on to his feet, and after a few jeering remarks from us anent his ludicrous appearance, he moved slowly and heavily down hill towards the river, with at least a hundred and twenty pounds of pork on his back.

It was mid-day, but we never thought of eating ; in fact, until the pork was cooked there was very little to eat at the camp, and we all intended to try to save up our appetites till evening.

On went Ben and I together, still keeping well away from the river and meaning to drop down to it somewhere below the camp, at the end of the open country, and then work up. We had no luck for some time, and the yelling of men, barking of dogs, and squealing of pigs must have been heard for miles around, and disturbed everything, for not till two o'clock did we come upon a small camp of pigs. How many it had contained I don't know, but there was just one left when we got there ; and had it not been for the inconvenience of travelling with a wild dog holding on to one ear and another to her hind leg, she would doubtless have followed her family ere this. As it was, she dragged those dogs about among some dry timber, and nearly got clear several times, so we had quite a rough-and-tumble before we got hold of her. Ben's knife put an end to her troubles.

After her obsequies, hunger and fatigue asserted themselves to such an extent that we had to give in to it, and between us we singed and cleaned that sow most elegantly, cut off half a dozen

tempting chops, lit a fire of dry stick, and toasted the chops before it *à la* Red Indian. This process is described in Maori as to 'huki,' and is simply and expeditiously performed by trimming the bark off a small stick to say two feet long and pointing the ends like a skewer; one end is then driven through the meat and the other stuck into the ground close to the fire, and slanting towards it.

We were both as hungry as four different kinds of bear, and did not wait to cook those chops quite as thoroughly as we ought to have done, but never have I enjoyed a luncheon more. Then, having lost a lot of time, but feeling much refreshed, we hung up the remainder of the pig on a branch well clear of the ground, and resumed our march.

The quiet of the last hour whilst we were lunching must have restored confidence among the pigs in the security of their surroundings, as we simply 'couldn't go wrong' for sport all the rest of that day.

We came upon our next pig in a most absurd manner, and one that gave him the laugh at us. We were following up a fairly well-defined pig-track, Ben being just ahead of me, and just as I was looking behind to see if the dogs were 'heeling up,' Ben chanced to stop short and stoop to examine some huge fresh boar-tracks in the soft ground of an old watercourse. The result was a collision which threw both of us down, but our amusement at this mishap was very speedily cut short as I saw on the track in front and above us,

and not twenty yards away, one of the largest boars it has ever been my luck to see. A glance of amazement seemed to mingle with his anger, but his great jaws worked savagely, and he kept sharpening his long incisor tusks on the teeth in his upper jaw which Nature has provided for the purpose, in a manner that looked like nothing but mischief. The dogs soon roused him to action, and as a pig always charges down hill, we jumped aside with no small haste, and not a moment too soon, as he rushed over where we had just been lying, like a tornado, with the dogs close at him ; and luckily his attention was taken up with making savage side dashes at them, so he omitted to visit either Ben or myself.

We did not want the brute, but it was no use trying to get the dogs back, so we followed along, and shortly afterwards came upon poor old Mike sitting whimpering on the track with a great gash ripped in his flank as clean as a razor-cut. We could only tie rags round him to try and stop the bleeding, but a child could see the wound was a mortal one ; and if the boar had heard the savage oath Ben let slip at the loss of his old favourite, he'd have never stopped running as long as he could wag a tail. There was nothing more to do to the poor old dog, but revenge never seemed sweeter, and I honestly confess I, at all events, had a lump in my throat as, having given our dumb, dying gladiator a farewell caress, we left him in the track to wreak vengeance on his slayer, and the farewell

he bade us, with his pitiful eyes already glazing with death, went to my heart with as much pathos as any dying message or honest hand-grip has ever done before or since.

But our thoughts were soon turned into another channel, for though at first it seemed utterly hopeless to expect to kill such a monster with only our one remaining dog, the boar very shortly made a move that gave quite a different aspect to the game, and looked all over like checkmating him. He suddenly changed his course and made down towards the river quite near, where the natives had pitched camp and were busy in singeing pigs, building fires and 'hapes.'¹

This was most fortunate, as we were able to enlist the services of Nieta and his dog, who were attracted by the noise. We sadly missed Mike, however, as neither of the others would hold, and that great brute nearly ran us all off our legs, up and down the shingle and rocks bailing up for a minute and then breaking away with a snort and a rush, and on these occasions very nearly getting one or other of us, and it was quite laughable to see the

¹ A Maori way of cooking meat and vegetables, which retains all the juices and flavour of the food and yet cooks it thoroughly. It is done by digging a hole in the ground or sand, the size of which is regulated by the meat to be cooked. In this a roaring fire of dry wood is made, and on top of the fire, round, clean stones are piled till they become very hot. The hole is then cleaned out and lined with the hot stones, on which is laid the food to be cooked; on top of this again is laid the remainder of the hot stones, and the *hape* is complete when it has a covering of ponga or tree fern fronds to keep in the steam.

nimble way in which the nearest man would contrive to get his legs off the ground by hauling himself up by a branch as he charged.

We were all dead-beat, when that rusty old boar brought the performances to a close of his own accord, for he made a break across the stream, and finding it unexpectedly deep, he had to swim, and thereby showed to least possible advantage. The dogs hung on to him at once in the deep water, and then Nieta did a most unsportsmanlike trick by running round to the other side of the pool and landing a great stone on piggy's head as he was trying to land. The rest was easy work, and we were soon tramping wearily back to camp, with some great sheets of shield and a jaw-bone with tusks that well repaid me for all our trouble, barring the death of poor old Mike.

That made No. 6, half killed for sport and half for use, and the natives had got two more small ones near camp, so we had all we wanted and more; but when in two hours' time—that is, about 8 p.m.—the three hapes were opened and three toothsome and beautifully cooked porkers were laid out on the flat rocks near the fire, I could see by the silent but vigorously conducted operations that proceeded for an hour or so that there was not going to be so much pork wasted after all; and I must ask the reader to be lenient in his judgment, and to remember that we were five hungry men who had had no meat and very little else to eat for weeks before.

So ended a glorious day's sport. We had many others before finishing that trip, but I think the above was *the* red-letter day ; and after the loss of Mike we hunted more for the pot than for tusks, and unless forced into it we left the old boars alone as much as possible.

IX

IN THE BUSH

BY A. HAMILTON

THE vast forests of New Zealand contain numerous birds which are well worth the trouble of hunting them out of their chosen haunts, even if the shooting is devoid of the charm attaching to pheasant or partridge shooting.

The settler in the bush districts can at the proper season rely upon a well-filled bag of the large wood-pigeon (*Hemiphaga Nova Zealandiæ*) or the brown parrot (*Nestor meridionalis*), both of which are easily approached and are so easily shot that a very moderate degree of skill, supplemented with a little bush-craft, will always secure sufficient for home consumption, with, if necessary, several brace for town friends. The pigeon is a noble member of the family of pigeons, and when in good condition should weigh about two pounds, so that there is no wonder that the natives of New Zealand considered it a very important item in their food store. In some seasons the birds appear much more plentiful than

in others; but this probably depends on an abundant crop of the berries on which they feed being in one district and a failure of the food supplies in another. About twenty years ago, in the bush near Wellington, with a very ordinary muzzle-loading double-barrelled gun, I could generally get as many pigeons as I could carry before mid-day from one wooded ridge. They are so loth to move when they have fed, that it was not uncommon to shoot half a dozen out of one tree, and hundreds of times I have seen a man wait until he could get two birds in a line before firing. As much of the slaughter was for the table, and for supplying the market, such opportunities for making a heavy bag were usually taken.

Some years ago I was in a wild and little-known part of New Zealand, amongst the forest tribes who had retired to their mountain fortresses and had not lost their old knowledge and customs, as their brethren of the coast, by contact with the European settlers. It is a wild and yet beautiful land, great cliffs rising straight up from the water's edge to the bush-clad summits eight hundred feet above. A star-shaped lake with forest trees down to the stones of the rugged shore, many a picturesque headland, winding inlets, each one bearing the names and achievements of the warriors of the olden times, fairy islets reflected in a silver sea, the sea of rippling waters—Waikare-Moana. After a few days' rest at the small settlement, an old man asked me if I cared to see how the birds were snared and

speared for the preserving pots in which were stored the supplies for winter. He called me at an early hour next morning, and I found him ready with his *kete*, or basket in which he carried his snares, and he dragged behind him a very long, thin wooden spear. These spears are made with great labour from a straight-grained tree called *tawa*.

The tree is first of all selected, and then after a long period of labour with the stone axe it is felled and the branches trimmed off, leaving the trunk about thirty or thirty-five feet long. This log is then carefully split with wedges, and if properly done a spear can be made from each half. The small portion of heart wood actually required for the spear is obtained by cutting two grooves down the centre of the log at the proper distance from each other, so that the spear can be made from the pieces between the grooves. Such a spear, *taoroo*, thirty feet long, and in no part an inch in diameter, cannot of course be handled by anyone but an expert. It is usually carried at the trail, held at one end. There are smaller ones, called *maiere*, about sixteen feet in length.

Before leaving the village my friend gathered a small branch from a shrub, and passing over to a large red-painted carved post, first touched his birdspear and then his basket of snares with the branchlet, and then threw it at the base of the *tuapa* or luck-post, repeating at the same time a spell or charm to ensure good luck in the expedition. Great care has to be taken in observing all

the old customs in this part of New Zealand, as omens and superstitions are innumerable.

It would have been highly improper if I had expressed an opinion as to the probable success of our hunt; counting your chickens before they are hatched is a *puhore*, or an omen of non-success. Even the names of things change under such circumstances. If I were to go and help dig up the edible roots called *perei*, neither I nor anyone with me must use that word; if necessary, the root must be mentioned as *maikaika*. Otherwise the roots will never be found. In like manner, I cannot use the word *wetewete* to denote taking birds from the snares, but must employ the word *wherawhera*. The *perei* root and the birds are assumed to know the ordinary Maori language, and an unusual word is therefore made use of in order that they may not understand it. During bird-taking season, no cooked food might be taken into or through the forest; the hunter may only carry food in a raw state, and any leaving of a meal may not be taken away from the spot where it was cooked.

The forest *mauri* or talisman would become powerless to keep the birds on such lands were the realms of Tane, the god of forests and birds, to be desecrated in such a manner. Also, when an earth-oven of birds is opened and the contents found not thoroughly cooked, it is the worst kind of an *aitua* to cook them a second time. It is a *tawhanarua*, and all the birds will emigrate from the surrounding forests.

Leaving the valley we struck a well-marked trail up a spur of the *Huiarau* Mountains through groves of a broad-leaved *Cordyline*, a palm-like liliaceous plant which provides a good fibre for lines and textiles. On reaching one of the well-known hunting-grounds, Maunga produced from his basket a barbed point or *makoi* for the end of his spear. In the days of old this was usually made from a human bone; it was about twelve inches in length and worked down to the size of a lead pencil, with several barbs. At the present time the iron from old gridirons is specially sought after, the bars being easily made into very serviceable *makoi*. The *makoi* was lashed firmly to the *matahere* or head of the spear, the butt of the spear being known as *hoehoe*. When not in use these long spears were kept hung up in a tree. For this purpose a short piece of wood was lashed across the spear near the head for hanging it up. The crutch stick was called *pekapeka*. In climbing a tree the fowler would thrust his spear up first and hang it to a branch. Having reached his prepared platform or standing-place, he would take off the *pekapeka* and pull his spear up. Advantage was taken of branches to act as rests and guides for these long spears; they were then pushed slowly until quite near the bird, and then a quick thrust of the spear would impale the bird on the *makoi*. The tree to which we first went was a well-known *kaihua* or bird-calling tree, and a kind of ladder called *rou* was fastened to the

trunk leading up to several platforms constructed amongst the branches, thirty or forty feet from the ground. These platforms commanded all the favourite resting-places of the pigeons, and in a very short time a number of fat birds were killed, without alarming those in the neighbourhood, who were busily feeding on the large red fruit or berry of the *miro* pine. Leaving his spear suspended in the tree, Maunga went on for some distance to a picturesque dell, where a small stream ran sparkling over a gravelly bed, and as we approached, a number of pigeons flew up with a startling rustle of wings. Producing a number of slip-noose snares of thin strips of the leaf of the cordyline, Maunga set several lines of these round the open sunny banks of the stream, and left them whilst we visited the camp of a party who were snaring the brown parrot or *kaka*. They had with them snare perches or *mutu* of shapes adapted to the branches of the trees to which they were lashed. There was no ladder or *rou* on the trees in this part, but the natives ascended by means of a looped cord through which the feet are slipped; and then another cord is put round the trunk and the ends grasped by the climber, who slips the cord up the trunk of the tree as he swarms up. This method of climbing is called *tapeke*. Having reached the platforms or branches, the fowler proceeds to arrange the snares on his *mutu*, and then takes the long stick *kokirikiri*, to which the *mutu* is attached, and thrusts it up through the head of the tree, so that

the parrots flying round the tree may be attracted by the perch and settle on it. The cord from the snare passes down to the fowler on the platform. Having set all his *mutu*, the fowler places close to him all the cords which lead from the different snares. He then proceeds to make his trained decoy parrot call out and attract any *kaka* there may be around. Should, however, the hunter not possess a tame bird, he will make use of the first bird caught, which is tied by the leg to a branch overhead, and its bill broken so that it may not gnaw the cord by which it is secured. When the hunter returns home he leaves the wild decoy to perish, as it is *tapu*, having been over his head. The trained decoy *kakas* were taken great care of and attached to a perch by a cord affixed to a bone or greenstone ring firmly fastened to the leg of the bird, each bird having its own *rohe* or food basket. It is trained to utter its cry or shriek of alarm, *tarakeha*, so as to gather the wild birds around it.

The parrots were busily engaged in obtaining the honey from the brilliant scarlet flowers of the *rata* (*Metrosideros robusta*), and the fowlers were taking many of the noisy visitors to the sweet nectar of the flowers. Each bird as it was snared was pulled down and deftly caught by the head so as to avoid the powerful beak. The native then placed the top of the bird's head in his mouth and killed it with a vigorous bite. There are many interesting facts connected with this parrot. The

male is known as *tata-apopo*, and has the head larger than the female, which is called *tara-riki*; these names obtain through the year. Other birds such as the *tui* (*Prosthemadera*) have not only names or words to describe the sexes, but different names at different times of the year. Each flock of *kaka* has its own feeding-ground and its own leader. The different flocks do not interfere with each other's preserves; they are divided into tribes, as the Maori is. The leader or chief of a flock is known as the *tarariki* or *tatariki*. It is invariably a small bird, and appears to act as a guide and marshal. It flies or hovers about outside the flock, and leads the flock from one feeding-ground to another. In addition to the flock leaders there are the great *ariki*. These are very rare birds. The term is applied to *kaka* which are red or white instead of the ordinary brown. They are also called *kaka-kura*. The *kaka-kura* do not fly with the flock, but keep aloof with a sole companion, an ordinary parrot. The *tatariki* leads the flock. It is said by the Maori that only one *ariki* is obtained in each district, though that district would contain many flocks of *kaka*. Others state that each district contains two *ariki*, one red and one white. The red or white birds are very scarce. A white variety of the bush hawk was also a very rare bird; hence the term was applied to chiefs.

An old proverb says, "Travel under the wing of the white hawk, or always travel with a chief, and

then you will get plenty of food." Another proverb says, "A pigeon at home—a *kaka* abroad." This is a jeering expression for those people who are dirty and wear shabby clothing at home, but dress well when they go visiting. In mid-winter the *kaka* are so fat that they may sometimes be caught by hand when surprised feeding on the ground, as then they cannot rise in flight, but instantly run to a tree, up which they climb. They are then easily knocked over with a stick or caught by hand. The small green bush parrakeet is taken in great numbers with decoy birds, and by an imitation of their calls.

There is another kind of parrot, the *kakapo*, which is of great interest to zoologists, as it has lost the power of flight and has become a night bird inhabiting the deepest recesses of the mountains. At present it is almost, if not quite, extinct in the North Island, though still plentiful in the wild west coast of the southern part of the South Island of New Zealand. The natives in the North hunted this bird at night with dogs and torches. Each dog was provided with a collar to which were fastened half a dozen pieces of the bone of a whale, or flat pieces of hard wood about four inches long. These pieces rattling together, enabled the dogs to be followed with ease through the dark bush. This kind of collar was called *kakara*. The natives say that the *kakapo* come forth from their holes at night, and meet in a common playground or *whawharua*. Having collected here, each bird,

with one exception, goes through a strange performance, by beating its wings on the ground and uttering its weird cry, which at the breeding season is very loud and harsh. The male seems to develop a kind of gular pouch or resonator, which enables him to produce most unearthly sounds.

While the bird is thus drumming and dancing, it is at the same time making a hole—*pokorua*—in the ground with its beak. Each playground has its leader, which is known as the *tiaka*. During the above performance, the leader keeps walking round the outer edge of the playground, presumably acting as a sentry, and does not join in the games. At dawn the birds disperse to their holes. The natives say that the birds collect to *tangi* in this way every night during the winter season; they also say that during the winter the *kakapos* diligently collect the fallen berries and seeds of the trees, and also fern root, and carry the same to secluded springs or pools of water, in which they place them to be used as food during the summer months, when such berries are not obtainable in the forests.

At the next settlement we came to two men who were preparing a fresh lot of snares from the split leaves of the 'cabbage tree' (cordyline). They were seated in a small house set apart at that time for this purpose, and called the *whare-mata*. While this work is going on, the house is highly *tapu*, and neither food nor women are

allowed inside it. At the opening of the season, the sacred fire is lighted by the priest, and the forest is made free from the *tapu* which has been on it during the close season. The different spells and incantations are there and then recited : amongst others, a *karakia*, appealing to Rangi and Papa, Heaven and Earth, to uphold and protect the *Maori* of the forest, and to cause birds to be plentiful. Some of the first made of the *rau-huka*, or snares, are thrown into the sacred fire as an offering. Great care is taken in preparing the snares. The leaves selected for the purpose, after being split into strips, are dried and then soaked in swamp water, where there is dark-coloured mud. This is to give them an old appearance, for the birds would not approach them if they were left in their natural colour. They are sometimes smoked instead. While the snares are being fixed and the various rites performed, the men may not go near their homes nor live with their families.

As soon as the first birds have been captured, they are cooked in a special earth-oven by the priest, who thus lifts the *tapu* from the *whare-mata* and its occupants. The *taumaha*, or thanksgiving prayer, is then repeated, and the fattest birds are cooked for the women ; after that others are cooked for the men.

On our return journey we overtook a number of men carrying back the pigeons and *kakas* obtained by the party from one settlement, and later on I saw the process of preserving the birds for future use.

The preserved birds, potted in their own fat, were highly valued by the inland tribes; and the Ngatiawa have a saying (showing the superiority of their food to the food of the coastal natives): "What good is your fish? one is always spitting forth bones when eating it; but our birds—ah! we eat straight ahead."

The way they prepared the birds was as follows:—Two or three stout sticks were stuck upright firmly in the ground. On one side of each stick (*pou*) are cut three or four notches, deep enough to carry transverse rods (*huki*). The birds are spitted closely on these rods,¹ until the rods are full; the ends of the rod are then placed on the notches (*kaniwha*) one above the other, so that the birds may overlap, or are in layers. A wooden trough or *waka* is placed on the ground below the birds. At one end this *waka* is grooved (*koaka*). A bright, strong, clear fire is now made in front of the *hukis*, and as the fat from the birds melts it runs into the *waka*, and from it by the grooves (*koaka*) into a *kumete*, or round wooden bowl buried in the ground. Then stones are made red-hot, and thrown into the *kumete* until the fat boils. The fat is then ready to be poured into the large calabash² (*taha*) to

¹ The chief bones are first taken out, an operation called *makire* or *kohure*.

² *Tahas* of preserved birds were frequently sent as gifts. In 1874 Paerau and Kereru Te Pukenui, two leading men of the Urewera, presented to Mr Brabant and Wiremu Kingi, as representing the Government, ten large *tahas*, some of them carved and ornamented, said to contain about eighteen hundred preserved birds. Kereru

cover the birds which have been packed in it. The *taha* was covered with a flax *kete*, round which were six or eight *kawai* or hoop handles (always an even number). When filled, the carved mouthpiece (*tuki*) was placed on the top, and rangiora (*Brachyglottis*) leaves placed on the top of the *tuki*. The loops were then drawn up round the mouthpiece, and laced over it with a cord (it was called a *ruru*, *he ruru taha*).

All the chief bird districts are in the woods of the foot-hills of the great ranges; here grow the chief food plants, making these the *whenua pua* or prolific lands. The principal timber trees grow here, several varieties of pines, and a great variety of shrubs and ferns, the latter including many beautiful varieties. On the higher ranges are vast beech or birch forests with deep mossy undergrowth, free from creepers and tangled undergrowth. Although the Maori does not worship any particular trees, yet as the offspring of Tane the mighty, he placates the spirits of the wood by casting before the first tree of unusual size or form that he passes, or any new track which he traverses, a branchlet or handful of grass. As it is from the forest trees that he derives, directly or indirectly, his daily food, he therefore treats them with due honour and respect.

Since I went out with old Maunga some years

made a speech, in which he said that he had been blamed by his tribe for taking money from the Government, and that the *tahas* were for his fault—that is, to repay the obligation he was under to the Government.

have passed, and he now rests with many of his forefathers in the burial-caves in the mountain mass of Maungapohatu; and although the young men still collect the birds in their proper season, few have the training in the older secrets of bush lore that was possessed by my friend.

X

RAINBOW TROUT FISHING AT OKOROIRE

BY F. O. BRIDGEMAN

“As inward love breeds outward talk,
The hound some praise and some the hawk ;
Some, better pleased with private sport,
Use tennis, some a mistress court ;
But these delights I neither wish
Nor envy, while I freely fish.”

—IZAAB WALTON.

I LAY claim to have discovered trout fishing at Okoroire in the North Island, and it was this way.

I was dining some six years ago with an old sportsman in Auckland, and found, in chatting with him after dinner, that he had been a great fisherman in his youth, and when two fly-casting enthusiasts get together, *tête-à-tête*, the subject generally monopolises the conversation, so ‘fish stories’ predominated for the rest of the evening.

My host, then getting on to eighty years of age, had fished in and explored many countries, and being blessed with a brilliant memory, he was most entertaining in recounting his experiences.

On my side I described the pleasure and excitement of some 'Mahseer' fishing I had had a few years previously in the Central Provinces of India, where the old gentleman had never been. I also spoke of the excellent trout fishing I had enjoyed in the South Island, and expressed regret that there was none to be had in the North.

"Well," said Sir George, "I have certainly not heard of any fish being caught with the fly in this province, but a good many trout of all varieties have been turned out in the streams from time to time, and although it is said they have not done well, I believe some of them must have survived.

"There are fish, I know, in the Waihou at Okoroire. I was up there for the baths quite recently, and I used to amuse myself daily by strolling down to the river, through the orchard below the hotel, and watching a fine trout, weighing, I should say, four pounds or more, always feeding at the same spot in a large pool at the bend."

The old gentleman admitted that this was the only fish he had seen, but said that where there was one there were probably more, and strongly recommended me to take a rod with me if I visited the Springs at the New Year, as I had told him I thought of doing.

This was how it was that when starting for Okoroire shortly after—just before the New Year of 1892, I think—I took with me a small ten-foot rod which I had brought from the South.

At that time no fly-fishing tackle was obtainable in Auckland, and I had therefore to depend on casts and flies which I had had in my fly-book for two years or more. However, I expected the scratch fit-out I had would be sufficient for all the fishing I should get at Okoroire, which is situated about a hundred and thirty miles by rail from Auckland on the route to the Hot Lakes; in fact, many tourists, before the railway was extended to Rotorua, broke their journey here and drove on by coach the next day, a most enjoyable drive through some lovely 'bush' scenery.

At the time of my visit the hotel and baths were comparatively newly established, but we found the former very comfortable, and the baths, situated some two or three hundred yards below the hotel on the banks of the Waihou river, I infinitely preferred to those at Rotorua.

On our arrival at the Sanatorium I proceeded to make inquiries of the manager as to the prospects of getting any fishing. Mine host stated that he had never been a fisherman, and he could not say that he had ever heard of any trout being caught locally, *but someone had told him* that fish had been seen in the river. This did not sound very promising.

I found that most of the property for some distance on the banks of the Waihou beyond the small Sanatorium domain belonged to a Mr R——, whom I had met previously in the south. His station homestead was situated some two or three

miles from the hotel, so I wrote a note the same evening asking him about the fishing, and for permission to trespass on his land if there was any chance of catching any fish therefrom.

The next morning, after enjoying a dip in No. 3 bath and a subsequent plunge in the colder water of the river, which can be reached by a side door and a flight of steps direct from the bath, I strolled back to the hotel by the river, which looked most inviting from a fly-fisherman's view, with its broken water and enticing pools, but I saw no fish moving, and reaching the orchard I looked in vain for any sign of Sir George's big fish at the bend. My hopes of getting any sport on this *aqua incognita* were diminishing fast, as it appeared to me that if there were any fish in such nice water someone would have been there with rod in hand before this.

During the forenoon Mr R—— drove over to the hotel to reply in person to my note. He also was not a fisherman, but he told me that a good number of trout had been put into the river, and that although it was not at all fished, he believed *there were some fish in it*.

How anyone could have lived on the banks of such a river in such unhappy ignorance I cannot understand.

He kindly gave me permission to try my luck on his property, so after lunch I started, with my wife, to explore.

We crossed the river by the bridge below the

baths, and walked up stream on the left bank. Our progress was slow, as we had to wade through high fern or bracken, and the river on either side was fringed with a belt of ti-tree scrub and flax.

I got a cast here and there in likely-looking spots, but never saw a sign of a fish, until we ascended a bluff overlooking the stream some twenty or thirty feet below, and there, in a clear pool at the end of a nice rapid at the bend of the river, we spotted a beautiful fish, which I calculated would be a four-pounder.

The sun was bright and the water fine, so we could see him plainly, and my spirits were considerably revived by knowing at last for a certainty that there was *something* in the river to fish for, which I had begun to doubt.

I noted that the pool where the fish was lying could be easily fished from the other side, and took bearings of the spot so that we might try for this big fellow on our way back, if we could manage to get across the stream higher up.

Further on we came to a Maori woodcutter's encampment, which we found in sole charge of an old hag who looked about a hundred years of age. She appeared very much surprised and somewhat flustered to see a Pakeha lady in such an out-of-the-way place, but my better-half soon reassured her and got on a friendly footing, although our conversation was restricted to signs, owing to our entire ignorance of the Maori language.

We had brought a 'billy' with us and the where-

withal for afternoon tea, so we decided to camp here and take advantage of the Maori's fire to boil our billy. The old image was employed when we arrived in preparing her men's evening meal, which consisted of a strange *olla-podrida* of pork, eels, and vegetables stewed in one pot, and she was highly delighted on being presented by my wife with some plum-cake.

Presently, when our tea was made and we were seated at some distance by the river-side, the old party brought us, in her fingers, which did not look too clean, a piece of greasy pork and two raw onions in exchange for the cake. I expressed our thanks and delight in the most flowery Hindustani, which I involuntarily fall back upon when I attempt to talk to the Maories. It is needless to say that the French or Russian language would have answered equally well.

We were afraid that our entertainer might wish to remain to see us enjoy the repast she had provided, but fortunately she returned to her culinary duties and gave us an opportunity of stealthily dropping the pork and onions into the river.

Starting again up stream, we came to a clearing where the Maories were at work cutting down the ti-tree. There was a nice stretch of water at this spot, and the bank being freer from bush, I expected to catch a fish or two here if they would take the fly at all. The Maories, some six or seven of them, came down to us when they saw me whipping the stream, and never having previously seen

anyone fly-fishing, they could not understand at all what I was about. They looked curiously at my tackle, and the gut and flies, which were new to them, seemed to puzzle them much. They shook their heads and chattered away at a great rate, and I fancy they were trying to explain to me that I would not catch eels that way.

Just then, however, I noticed a fish quietly feeding on the further side of the stream. He was hardly breaking the water, but was evidently 'on the job,' sucking in flies greedily.

With a longish line I got a good cast-in just above him at the first attempt. There was a swirl as he went for my tail fly, a 'Governor'; a turn of the wrist and I had him. Away he went up stream right gamely, taking a lot of line and making my reel spin again. He made several gallant rushes to gain his freedom, and I had to handle him very gently, not being at all sure of my old tackle.

All this time the Maories were rampant with excitement, gesticulating furiously and yelling out "*Kapai-Kapai te Pakeha*,"¹ and I was afraid when I had the fish half killed that they would plunge into the river to seize and probably lose him.

However, when he was played out and I brought him sufficiently close to the bank, my wife, who is accustomed to land my fish for me, quickly had him in the net and on the bank—a fine rainbow trout (*Salmo iridens*) of about two pounds, the first of the species I had ever caught or seen.

¹ "Very good—very good the European."

These trout, introduced from California, are beautifully marked, and prettier fish in every way than the brown trout. They are of a greenish colour on the back, with jet-black spots on the back and sides, including the dorsal fin and tail, belly silvery, and in shape approaching that of a salmon, but somewhat deeper. The male fish have a pink stripe along the lateral line from the gill-cover to the tail, and in some specimens the gill-covers are also pink of a deeper shade.

I have since seen some fine specimens of this species in the ponds of the Otago Acclimatisation Society's hatcheries at Clinton, where they were bred and reared; but although a large number have been turned into the southern rivers, they do not seem to have done so well there as in the warmer climate of the north, and I do not know of any being caught in Otago.

The manager of the Clinton hatcheries recently showed me a cross which he had effected between the American brook-trout (*Salmo fontinalis*) and the Loch Leven trout. This hybrid is a well-shaped fish, light in colour and silvery, with well-defined black zebra-like stripes. I should imagine that if a cross between the rainbow and brown trout could be established, the hybrid would be a good fish for the Otago rivers.

In spite of our Maori friends showing themselves freely on the bank, which would have scared any ordinary trout, I picked up another brace of about the same size on this bit of water. The

fish were not at all shy, but very game when hooked.

We now wanted to cross the river with the view of returning on the other bank, but although it was fordable for me in some places, the difficulty was how to get my wife over. I endeavoured to find out from the Maories if there was any sort of bridge higher up, and this I explained by making a diminutive bridge over a rivulet and pointing across and up the river. They understood me and shook their heads, and made signs to explain that the stream was not deep, and that we could cross at this spot. When I pointed to the lady and asked as well as I could how she was to effect the passage, they remarked "Taihoa,"¹ and went away to the 'bush' which they were clearing, and returned with some boughs of ti-tree which they proceeded to lace across with flax, and made a very respectable hand-litter with which they proposed to convey my wife across. She accepted the offer without demur, and got over quite comfortably. I presented her bearers with one of the fish, with which they were highly delighted, and I hoped they would now return to their work. But they had evidently struck for that day, and stuck to us.

However, when we had reached a point opposite their camp they left us, and hurried over with their prize to the old woman, who probably put it immediately into the pot with the pork and eels.

¹ "Taihoa"—Wait a bit,

I took a cast here and there going down stream, but did not stir another fish until we reached the pool below the bluff from which we had seen the big trout. There was a fine open space at this bend, and after a few casts in the broken waters at the head of the pool without any result, I raised a fish at the tail of the rapid, but missed him. He came at me again, however, at the next cast, and this time I had him. When he felt the hook he jumped out of the water like a salmon, and I calculated he weighed nearer five than four pounds, but alas! I could not verify this in the scale.

On the other side of the pool, under the high bank, lay a big snag, and for this, probably his home, my fish immediately shaped his course. I knew that if he reached that old log I should lose him, and with my doubtful tackle I did not dare to hold on to him. It was a critical moment and something had to be done, so I gave him a check as gently as I could, but it was fatal. The strain was too much for my old cast, and my big fish went away with it to its lair, much to my disgust. I was only glad that the Maories had left us, and that they did not witness my discomfiture.

I got another nice little fish of about a pound just before we reached the hotel, and altogether, in spite of the loss of the big fellow, we were satisfied with the afternoon's sport, as I had not expected much.

The next day was a Sunday, and soon after breakfast, whilst enjoying a quiet smoke in the verandah of the hotel, I heard a commotion outside,

and just as I was getting up to see what it was all about, the manager came in to tell me that about thirty or forty Maories had assembled to see the Pakeha's fishing-tackle. So I had to go out and put up my rod for them to inspect, and each one insisted on handling it. They were much taken with the reel, but what seemed to astonish them most was the fine gut and the small flies.

One of the men, knowing some English, told me they had never seen a rod and line like this before, and they wanted me to proceed at once to the river and show them how fish were caught with it.

Thinking there would not be much chance of catching any fish with such a crowd around me, I told them that Pakehas never fished on the Sabbath, or hardly ever—certainly not when they had their 'mems' with them! The interpreter then informed me that there were "plenty Pakeha fish" in the Waimakiriri river, which I found was only some five or six miles from the hotel, on the road to Rotorua.

After consulting the hotel manager I decided to try the Waimakiriri the next day, and after an early breakfast we started off in the hotel buggy for that stream, which we had no difficulty in finding. We left our trap at the bridge, according to our directions, and I was soon at work on very promising-looking water. It did not take long to find out that the fish were on the feed, seemed to be numerous, and not at all shy. We landed three beauties from the first pool above the bridge, and

when we stopped to boil our 'billy' and have lunch about one o'clock, I had bagged twelve nice fish, all rainbow trout, averaging about two pounds.

Just after starting again I met with a sad mishap, which I thought would put an end to my fishing for that day. I had hooked a good fish, a three-pounder at least, close to where we had camped, and had him nearly killed, when I slipped on a mossy boulder in the stream, and down I went on the broad of my back in the water. Bang went my top-joint close to the ferrule, and of course away went the fish.

I had a spare top, but of course it was left in the case at the hotel. So after breaking some of my front teeth in vain attempts to disjoint the broken top, my wife took the rod out of my hands and told me to go away and indulge in bad language out of her hearing, and have a smoke to soothe my troubled spirit.

She took all the credit to herself of gently heating the ferrule in the embers of the fire we had lighted, and finally getting it cleared out with a corkscrew or hairpin or some other female contrivance; and after that, *between us* we soon had the rod 'jury-rigged' with the broken top, and I added six more fish to our 'kit' before it was time to start on our return.

Eighteen fish weighing just under forty pounds was not a bad day's sport, and I daresay I lost half that number owing to the defective gut I was using. There did not appear to be any small

fish in these streams—I caught nothing under one pound, nor did we see any smaller fry in the pools.

The following day I fished the Waihou again, returning to the hotel with eleven fish weighing twenty-five pounds. I had started fishing in the orchard below the hotel in the morning, and saw a large trout rising in the pool at the bend, but although I tried for him some time, I could not induce him to look at my flies.

Having to return to Auckland the next morning, I decided to have one more try in the dusk of the evening for this fish, which was probably the same which Sir George had marked down. So after dinner we strolled down to the river, and found my friend in the same place, and evidently on the feed. Time after time I cast without disturbing him at all, and he allowed my flies to sail past him without taking the slightest notice of them. It was evident he was 'not taking any' of that sort, although he was feeding on something.

I changed my flies in vain, until I put up a big fly with a scarlet body, gold twist and speckled wings—a 'Wickham's Fancy,' I think it is named, dressed large. At my first cast with this fly, the big trout did not wait for it to reach him, but took it with a rush as if it was a minnow, and after he had given me some real good sport, the speckled beauty lay on the grass at our feet, and proved to be a nice fish of four and a half pounds. I sent him the next day to Sir George, with a card notifying that it was his 'pet fish' from Okoroire.

This was a satisfactory ending to two days and a half of very fair sport amongst the rainbow trout—in fact, much better than I had anticipated.

Our total take amounted to thirty-four fish, weighing about seventy-five pounds. The majority I killed with the 'Governor,' a fly which takes well, I may safely say, at all times, on most of the New Zealand rivers, both in the North and South Islands.

As the result of my experience the proprietor of the Okoroire Sanatorium added to his advertisement "Good trout-fishing" as a further inducement to visitors and tourists.

The Acclimatisation Society also, not long after my visit, removed their fish hatcheries from the domain at Auckland to the banks of the Waimakiriri, where they are now located close to the bridge, the point at which I started fishing on that river. The Society also now have a ranger on the streams I have mentioned, and the banks have, I understand, been cleared to some extent for the benefit of fishermen.

I left Auckland soon after my trip to the Springs, and have not since had an opportunity of getting another shy at the rainbow trout, but I am told the Waihou, Waimakiriri and Orakau streams are a good deal fished nowadays; and from all accounts the trout and the natives are not so unsophisticated as they were at the time I have referred to. Apropos of the advertisement of the Okoroire Sanatorium mentioned above, I

was told a good story, which is perhaps worth relating.

The manager of the Sanatorium not being a fisherman, as before stated, neglected to withdraw the notice of "Good trout-fishing" at the end of the season. In the month of May following, an Auckland sportsman, member of the Acclimatisation Society, was proceeding up the line for some duck-shooting, and he noticed in the train two strangers who had with them in the carriage rods and the usual accessories for fishing.

He discovered they were American tourists, and on entering into conversation with them he asked what they were going to do with their rods?

They stated that they had heard in America of the trout-fishing in New Zealand, and had brought their 'poles' over with them. They had seen the Okoroire advertisement in the Auckland papers, and 'calculated' they were going up to fish there. Whether they were not sportsmen, or had failed to note the change of seasons on this side of the Equator, I do not know, but they were much chagrined on being told that the fishing season had closed, and that they could not make use of their poles on that occasion.

I will finish my yarn by saying to all intending visitors to New Zealand, in the words of Charles Cotton, another of the 'old masters' of the angle: 'We'll reconcile you to the country before we part with you: if showing you good sport with angling will do it.'

XI

A FALLOW DEER SHOOTING TRIP

BY ARTHUR STRONACH

IT was my good fortune to receive an invitation for a week's deer-stalking during April last, which was very readily accepted, after having made arrangements for the required leave.

The start was made from Dunedin on 11th April. Being duly provided with a licence (which costs £2 and allows the holder to shoot four bucks), I caught the morning train for the south, and having forgathered with my host, G——, some eighty miles down the line at Clinton, the journey was continued by the main south line to Waipahi Junction, where we changed to the branch line for Tapanui, which was to be the base of our operations. This country township was reached late in the afternoon, the balance of the day being spent in looking over the outfit, which comprised a good canvas tent, with fly, a stock of provisions, cooking utensils, etc., and two double express '450 rifles by Holland. Having satisfied ourselves that all was in order, some time was devoted to looking up the local

sportsmen and gathering information as to best position for a camp and prospects of good sport. I am bound to confess that replies were most contradictory and amusing. It was at once obvious that each man had his own particular plant, *and was prepared to protect it at all hazards!*

Before going further, I should explain that Tapanui is situated at the base of the Blue Mountains, a range of hills reaching in parts an altitude of something over three thousand feet above sea-level. On both sides of the mountain are rough, bush-clad gullies, many of them bearing names, amongst which are Whisky Gully, Brandy Gully, The Deer Pass, The Ravine, Black Gully, The Black Cleugh, etc. All parts were strongly recommended by different people, and were equally strongly condemned by others. We were rather at a loss what to do, and, had pack-horses been available, would likely have tried some new ground on the far side of the mountain; but pack-horses were not to be got, and after a deal of solemn discussion it was decided to shoot the Black Gully part first, at all events, as we had both been on that country before, and, other things being equal, there is a lot in knowing the ground. Having made up our minds on this, instructions were given for an early start in the morning, and we took up our quarters for that night at the Tapanui Hotel. Tapanui, by the way, is what is called a prohibition town—that is, no licence is allowed for the sale of intoxicating

liquors. Perhaps this accounts for the residents cherishing such names as Whisky and Brandy Gullies.

On the morning of the 12th all goods and chattels were stowed away on board a heavy express waggon drawn by two horses, and after careful inspection to ascertain that nothing of importance was forgotten, a start was made for Black Gully, about seven miles in a northerly direction from Tapanui.

Our route lay along the foot-hills of the mountains by a good road, and as the team was willing, it was not long before our destination was reached.

The party consisted of my friend and host G——, a Dunedin High School boy, Jack, the caretaker of the camp, Johnston, and the writer.

A level spot beneath a large birch tree and close to water was selected for a camp, and most of the day was spent in making our quarters comfortable. Having at one time lived for about two years under canvas, I flattered myself I knew what constituted comfort in camp; but my host was a past master in all matters pertaining to a life in the open, and when all was to his satisfaction, I had to confess myself comparatively a new chum at the game.

Everything being completed about 3 p.m., it was suggested that G—— and myself should have a quiet turn round on the hill, so, unpacking the rifles, and taking a few cartridges and a field-glass, we started up a bush-covered spur, which we afterwards called

the 'middle ridge,' and after a climb through heavy birch timber (really beech, *Fagus Cliffordioides*), open ground was reached about seven hundred feet above the tent. Making a careful survey with the glasses from the edge of the bush, we discovered first a dainty-looking little yellow doe feeding quietly by herself amongst some flax bushes (*Phormium tenax*), and further up the mountain several others, with two young bucks or 'spikers,' but could see nothing worthy of our attention. Continuing our climb, several more does were seen, and by aid of the glass we at last made out one fine buck carrying a good head. He was a long way off, and crossing the saddle on top of the mountain, making from the head of Black Gully, on our side, to the Black Cleugh on the eastern side. As it was already growing dusk, we started back for camp, having satisfied ourselves that we had selected a good place.

Breakfast was over by daylight on the 13th, and a move was again made upwards, G—— and Jack taking a spur to the right, while Johnston and I went up the middle ridge track of yesterday. The morning air was distinctly bracing, and without the exercise of hill-climbing would have been unpleasantly cold.

Before reaching the open ground where we had sighted the does yesterday, a low saddle occurs in the bush, and it was decided that I should wait here in such a position that I could command this saddle and the bare ground at the edge of the

bush as well, in the hope that G——, on the next riding, might set something afoot.

After waiting about half an hour in this place, watching and listening intently for anything moving on my left, I was suddenly aware of game approaching from the opposite direction, and next moment a buck showing some eight points came trotting along, followed by three does. The bush was open and almost devoid of undergrowth, so that I got a fair view, although they were some seventy yards distant. The eight-pointer offered a tempting shot, but I decided to let him go, and had no sooner come to this conclusion than virtue was rewarded, in the shape of a noble fellow of some fourteen points, who came hustling along after his mates. It was a simple shot, but I confess to being a bit anxious about it. The smoke hung badly, and the first thing I saw, as the air cleared, was a deer with some sort of antlers disappearing in the direction from which they had all come, and for a moment I thought I had made a very bad beginning. The one at which I fired had, however, dropped quite dead, being hit in the neck, while the buck I had seen making off was evidently the little chap who led the party as they first appeared.

Johnston being an expert with the knife, my first buck for the season was soon in order for hanging up to a suitable tree, where, after an extra dose of pepper to protect him from the flies, he was left, to be brought to camp later on.

This buck was almost black in colour, and not in very good condition.

Continuing the climb without any further chance of a shot, we met G—— and Jack near the top of the mountain. They had had no sport, although a shot might have been had at one fair buck, but G—— is most ambitious in the matter of heads, and generally gets something good in the end. Would that more of the people who shoot the Blue Mountains followed his example!

After lunch, and till we got back to our tents at dusk, we explored the eastern side of the mountain, but without any luck, although tracks were plentiful.

Next morning another early breakfast, and a start was made up the gullies this time, instead of the ridges as yesterday. As this meant walking through bush and along sidelings more or less steep, progress was slow, if only to avoid noise: approaching a fallow deer in the bush, to be done successfully, is similar work to 'creeping' a moose, or what is very aptly termed 'still hunting' in America.

For my part I would rather stalk one deer out in the open than bag the whole four in the bush.

About ten o'clock a brown object, with what seemed a very fair head, gave me a chance of a snap-shot, and I scored a miss. Nothing more was seen before reaching the head of the gully. We now made out of the cover for an open part of the high ground, where it had been agreed we should all

meet. With the glass we saw Jack on the edge of the clear ground, a long way below us. He shortly disappeared, but had evidently seen us, and having made us signals, we lit our pipes and waited—and waited—and waited. We were wondering what caused the delay, when we saw G—— coming out of the bush at about our level, and looking rather fagged out, which is, under almost any circumstances, a most unusual thing with him.

He explained that in attempting to follow a deer, or rather to locate it by the sound, and approach within shot, he had got into a rocky basin in the bush, which proved a regular trap, and had taken him nearly two hours to get out of.

In a short time Jack appeared in the open again, but still a long way below us. We signalled to him to join us, which he did after a long climb; he had also been quite at sea as to the whereabouts of G——.

A spot was selected beside a spring of beautifully clear water, coming directly out of a wall of rock, and here we refreshed the inner man, and spent some time looking at the surrounding country. On a clear day a great sweep of land and sea can be seen from the top of the Blue Mountains. On one side the blue Pacific with one of the Union Steamship Company's boats creeping up the coast, while the snow-clad Remarkables, on the far side of Lake Wakatipu, were plainly visible to the west.

A council of war being held, we agreed to try down the Black Cleugh side, and while spying out

the land in that direction, we saw what appeared to be a doe lying asleep in a clump of rushes, and were careful to avoid disturbing her as we passed close to the spot.

Further on, tracks were numerous, but we saw no deer. Coming back, a stalk was attempted by Jack (he was armed with a field-glass only), to see how close he could get to the sleeping doe: he made such a success of it that he was within a few yards before discovering that the beast was dead. It proved to be a young buck, a poor little 'spiker,' that had been shot through the shoulder by some wretched pot-hunter.

The sportsman (?) who shoots at any object showing signs of life, quite regardless of age or sex, in or out of season, is very much in evidence in New Zealand.

Approaching the top of the hill again on the way home, a very large buck was seen lying down near the edge of the bush on a small saddle, which was much higher than the one we had crossed and purposed returning by. Leaving Jack and Johnston to watch him with the glass, G—— and the writer started off with the intention of getting a shot, but, on looking back, after having covered most of the ground, we saw to our disgust that Johnston was signalling us that the deer had made off into the Black Cleugh bush.

Having all forgathered again, we decided to wait for a time on the saddle, and while doing so we observed five does come out of the bush, on a

hillside opposite to where we sat. They fed quietly for a time, and then scampered on into a shallow open gully. Very shortly afterwards, their lord and master—a fine buck, white as snow, and with a splendid head—stalked proudly out, doubtless to inquire the whereabouts of the does, and of this he seemed uncertain, for after polishing up his antlers on a low-growing birch tree, he re-entered the bush without them.

A hurried plan of action was discussed, and G—— and Johnston determined to try for him, while Jack and I made towards camp. Wishing G—— the best of luck, we parted, and started homewards through a very rough and heavily-timbered gully. Jack had had such a gruelling in the morning, that he was almost done up by this time, and I began to fear that he would be unable to make the tent that night. However, with plenty of encouragement, and numerous spells, we at last reached the bare ridge of the middle span, and followed down an easy grade to camp.

It was late before G—— and Johnston got back. They had put up record time after leaving us, in arriving at the spot where the white fellow had been seen, and following this up by a great scramble in the bush. G—— had a snap-shot at him, but without success. Johnston had almost collided with this white buck, and they both stood staring at each other in the bush for half a minute or so, and Johnston carried nothing more deadly than a knife.

We were all very hungry after the long day in

the open. I am satisfied that the air of the Blue Mountains would be worth any amount of money in the neighbourhood of an eating-house. Full justice was done to the spread provided, and having smoked the pipe of peace and contentment, and vowed that a white buck should die next day, we were soon wrapped in opossum rugs and slumber.

Coffee was ready at daybreak, and a few minutes later saw us ascending the middle ridge again, with the avowed object of getting the white buck. Several bucks were heard in the heavy timber to our left and in the bottom of the gully, but they might be any colour, and we were after a white one. All precautions were taken as we neared the top, and, ascertaining that the wind was right, we gained a rocky crown overlooking that piece of country which we had concluded was the domain of our white friend, but careful inspection with the glasses discovered no sign of him, so, after a reasonable wait, his territory was invaded, the four of us going quietly through the bush and covering as much ground as possible. Some considerable time being spent in this way with no result, an adjournment was made for lunch; after which we made along the top of the mountain in a southerly direction. On topping a small rise, G——, who was leading, dropped on his knees and beckoned us forward quietly, and there, some three ridges away, was a white buck. The glass being brought to bear, it was unanimously carried that he was *the* white buck of yesterday, and was worth any amount

of trouble. As we were speaking, he walked leisurely over a bare ridge in the direction of a comparatively small patch of birch bush and disappeared. This looked promising, for the bush was not of any great extent, and we considered him fairly marked down.

Before proceeding, another careful survey with the glass was made, and four does were revealed on open ground between us and the bush; this meant increasing the difficulty of our approach, but we were all prepared to undertake anything short of impossibilities under the circumstances. The bush in which we had marked down our friend was of a fair width at the upper end, and connected by a narrow strip at the lower part to a much larger piece of timbered country.

A long detour being made, we reached the upper end of the bush, and the plan of attack was arranged. G—— was to have another long walk and get in a position to command the narrow strip at the bottom, as it was thought the likeliest place for a shot. Jack would go quietly down the spur on the left, and Johnston through the centre of the bush, while, after they all had a fair start, my beat was the right-hand side of the bush. G—— had shown himself in position, the others then left me, and I started along the top to reach the spur assigned to me, and on turning the corner of the bush discovered the white fellow lying down within two hundred yards of me at the edge of the open ground. He appeared to be asleep at first,

but with the glass I saw a movement of the head as though the flies were annoying him, and moreover, to all appearance he was *the* white buck. I thought of putting him up in the hope that G—— would get a shot at the lower end, but the beast might go anywhere and we would all look foolish if he escaped after all our trouble; so, adjusting the sights for two hundred yards, I took him as a sitter. He jumped to his feet and appeared to be staring round in a dazed sort of way as though wondering where the noise came from. I considered it was a miss, and decided to let him alone if he made for the bush, and so give G—— a chance, and only to use the second barrel if he tried to escape in the other direction. I was of course watching him intently, and was agreeably surprised to see him suddenly rear up straight on his hind legs and fall over backwards. The expansive bullet had gone in behind the shoulder and in a forward direction, making a frightful hole, and the wonder was that he ever regained his feet. This was not *the* white buck, though, after all: he carried only ten points, was not so beautifully white as he looked from a distance, and was in only fair condition.

This deer was a long way from camp, but Johnston and I got him down over the worst of the country—with very great exertion on my part—and hung him up on a tree.

G—— was going very lame when we met him, having slipped and struck his knee-cap on a root of birch; he could walk up-hill right enough, but

it was very plain to see that down-hill gave him torture. Jack and Johnston hurried on, and G—— and I made much slower progress, but arrived at camp before dark and in time for tea.

The following morning we lost Jack ; he had to get back to school, so for the remainder of our stay we were one man short.

G—— thought it advisable to stick to the lower ground again, as the knee, though showing some little improvement, was not equal to much down-hill work. Johnston and I accordingly left him at the bush-cutters' track, and started for high ground by way of the middle ridge.

On reaching open country the glass was brought to bear, and some ten or twelve does were immediately brought to view on a part of the hill which was just catching the first of the morning sun ; while further search discovered what appeared to be a really good buck.

He was lying down, and some movement of the head in the sunlight gave us a view of something better in the way of antlers than we had yet bagged.

It was a long climb, but an easy stalk, the bush affording cover most of the way.

Arriving at what was considered the right level, we had a short spell to recover wind, and then, with every caution, crept out towards the edge of the timber, and were rewarded for our pains by meeting a doe face to face. We stood like uncomfortable-looking statues for what seemed many minutes, and at last got a chance to step back

behind a tree ; keeping this in the line of sight we soon got out of danger, and made another attempt a little higher up.

This time we saw five does, but no appearance of our friend. While awaiting developments we heard the noise peculiar to a buck at rutting time. The sound seemed to come from behind us, in the bush, at first ; but a repetition of it gave us the right direction, and our victim appeared with one doe, beyond the group of five we had been watching. The shot created tremendous consternation, and flying does were seen in all directions, while the buck made one plunge forward and fell quite dead. He proved to be the best of all our heads. I shall not commit myself to number of points, but a Tapanui sportsman made the count forty-two. I need hardly say that the Tapanui folk give everything the benefit of the doubt when computing the size of the head.

This buck was large of body, almost black in colour, and in moderately good condition.

We took the head only, carefully skinning the neck well back to the shoulders.

The home of the big white fellow was within reasonable distance, so we resolved to pay him a morning call. He was not receiving visitors, however, for a flash of white was all we saw of him as he made off through heavy timber with a lot of undergrowth which gave no opportunity for a shot.

We had no further luck this day ourselves, but found on getting to camp that G—— had scored a

good head, and, even better still, that the knee was sound as ever. He had killed the deer in rather a rough bit of country, and was carrying out the head, when a loose stone caused him to stumble and fall, and strangely enough this spill undid the mischief caused by the first ; for on regaining his feet he was rejoiced to find that all pains had gone, and that up or down hill made no difference, nor did the knee give any further trouble during the trip.

Next morning I scored my fourth deer, a fair head and a very pretty skin, brown in colour, shading off to yellow underneath, and with light-coloured spots on the brown part. This buck was shot in the bush. He was in prime fat condition,—the heaviest one we had got.

All the deer in the mountain must have known that I had reached my limit, for during the remainder of the day I was offered easy shots at eight different bucks.

G—— got another deer this same morning, so that only one more was required by him to complete the number.

By this time we were getting into good form for the hill work, and regretted that it would soon be over.

We all went out together this last day to see the final shot, and this occurred about 8 a.m.

It was bush work again ; we heard something move up-hill from where we were, then a doe appeared, followed by one of the dark-coloured bucks. Although he was not far off, we could not decide about the head, as to whether it was good

enough or not ; but at last G—— made up his mind, and getting quietly down on his waistcoat buttons, waited for a broadside shot. The chance came at last and was promptly accepted.

Although the Holland bullet was well placed, the deer went some little distance before coming down, but was dead when we reached him. The head was not quite as good as we thought, but nice and even, with a good spread.

We carried this fellow out to open ground, reached camp for the last time about 10 a.m., and finally got back to Tapanui in the evening.

It was quite disappointing to wake up next morning and realise by the surroundings that our shooting tour was over.

From here I had to journey alone, as G—— was spending several days in the neighbourhood ; and so ended an expedition which had in it much wholesome recreation and all things which go to make one's recollections of it wholly pleasant.

XII

NATIVE GAME ON LAKE TE ANAU

BY E. MELLAND

WE were on our way up to Lake Te Anau when we were invited by the manager of a large station in the neighbourhood to have a day with him at the Paradise ducks. Large mobs of these handsome birds dotted about the oat-stubble and English grass paddocks could be seen from the homestead, and added weight to the invitation, so we decided to stay—the more readily as there was no fear of anyone disturbing the ducks at Lake Te Anau before our arrival. We spent a pleasant evening with our host, helping him to load his cartridges with E. C. powder and No. 2 shot, and discussing our plans for the morrow. Three shelters had been made some days ago (to give the ducks time to grow accustomed to them), and as we were four guns in all, the fourth man decided to try his fortune at stalking, using for that purpose some dry watercourses which intersected some of the paddocks.

The next morning, after breakfast at a reason-

able hour, we set out laden with guns, ammunition, waterproof coats—to sit on, rather than to wear—and two decoys apiece. These had been shot some days before, and it required considerable skill to fix them up with the aid of a forked twig or two, so as to look natural enough to deceive their living comrades. Each man set his decoys about five-and-twenty yards from his shelter, and of course added to them later on, using, however, only the best birds—those with no ruffled feathers and with no blood visible.

My shelter was partly dug out of the ground and then covered with manuka branches stuck in the earth to look as much as possible like a growing bush, for your Paradise duck has a suspicious mind. The next shelter was half a mile away, so I was prepared for a solitary day, the main preparations being a book, a pipe, a flask and some sandwiches. The paddocks where these ducks delight to congregate must have spread over some two or three square miles, so a small boy had been sent out on an old horse with instructions to “keep the ducks a-moving,” by riding round at a good distance from the shelters and putting up any mobs he could find. These disturbed birds would then fly round and round for a short time and probably finally pitch close to one or other set of decoys—that is, if we were fortunate, and the ducks were kind.

Sometimes a rush of wings was my first intimation of the arrival of a mob, but more often the

peculiar wailing cry (from which these ducks years ago received their Maori name, 'Putangi'¹) gave one longer notice. A careful survey of the position through the interstices of the scrub walls of the shelter, two barrels fired in quick succession, and the mob are away again. Then a hurried exit from the shelter to bring in the slain—or to set them up for decoys—and back again for another wait. After a time my solitude was relieved by the appearance of the fourth man, who arrived at my camp with a brace of ducks, the meagre result of two hours' careful crawling along dry water-courses and through long tussock grass. "The brutes know too much for me," was his summary of the situation; "they fly high and decline to settle within eighty yards of a ditch. After a long stalk you find them just out of range." A small mob had passed over him flying unusually low, or he would not have had anything at all to show for his trouble. We surprised the next mob that arrived with four barrels instead of two, and the survivors cleared out at a great rate, making for the distant lake, and we saw them no more.

By the disappearance in this fashion of the more timid or the more intelligent birds, the supply began to fall off in the afternoon; so we brought our game into the shelter and walked over to a swampy creek not far away to see if we could find a pukeko. We shot one, and could probably have got many more if we had had a good water-spaniel to work

¹ Wail of death.

in among the rushes and put up the birds. As we strolled back to the homestead we decided that this Paradise duck-shooting over decoys, although an excellent system for making a heavy bag, is a little deficient from the point of view of sport. So carefully has the shelter to be made, both overhead and all round, that a practicable chance of a good flying shot is a very rare event; and to poke the muzzle of a gun through a hole and fire at birds on the ground or just rising, is rather too much like murder. However, the result, as far as numbers were concerned, was satisfactory enough. When the small boy who had driven a spring-cart round to the shelters came in with his booty, we counted seventy-eight ducks in all, besides a brace of pukeko. Some years ago, when the Paradise duck was a more ingenuous and confiding bird, and before their numbers had been thinned by the phosphorised oats intended for the rabbits, this would not have been a large bag for four guns, but under present circumstances it was good enough.

The next morning F—— and I were in the saddle betimes, for we had a long and rough ride before us. Our destination was a sheep-station situated on a beautiful bay on the east shore of Te Anau, about twenty miles from either end of the lake. Fortunately the day was very fine, so we enjoyed our ride thoroughly, in spite of river beds, swamps and bush tracks, and we were in capital form for our roast mutton at the end of our journey. We had now arrived at *Ultima Thule*. We were a very long

thirty miles from the nearest station. North and west of us there was nothing but the lake and the mountains—the Southern Alps—covered with dense ‘bush’ to the 3000-foot level, and with snow on the highest peaks. The total population of the station was three shepherds, a male cook and gardener, and ‘Dick,’ who was to be our companion in sport. Dick was the best of comrades for the work we had in view: brought up in the backwoods of Australia, he had a natural taste for the study of wild fauna, and what he did not know about Lake Te Anau and the habits and habitats of its feathered population might truly be said to be not worth knowing. He was, moreover, a first-class boatman, and his little boat was a very handy craft, either for rowing or sailing, and just the right size for three. So with the aid of Dick, and our pipes, we put in a very pleasant evening, discussing our plan of campaign from various points of view, until about ten o’clock, when F—— and I retired to our bunks and blankets.

I must have under-estimated, by at least one, the correct number of blankets we required, for some little time before daybreak the weather turned to frost, and the cold very soon not only awoke me but kept me awake. I did not see why F—— should sleep when I could not, so I awakened him and suggested our giving a lagoon (that was only about half a mile away) a surprise visit at break of day. Fortunately he took the proposal in the right spirit, and we were soon on our way. The

lagoon was a small one, perhaps a quarter of a mile across, with bush round the opposite shore, but only flax bushes and rushes on our side. We knew this was a favourite night-camp for the grey duck and black teal, so we stole along behind the flax trying not to tread on the dead stalks, which break with such a loud report ; and peeping out at the water every now and then, we heard the low whistle of black teal swimming not far from us, but we could see nothing, though the light was improving every minute. Suddenly there was a wild whirr of wings—a mob of greys had risen and made for the lake, and so quickly were they away that, though we rushed down to the water's edge, not a shot could we get at them. But at that moment we got four or five more just in front of us. Four barrels were fired, but only two birds fell. I knew my *first* shot had been too high, and when F—— claimed both birds, I was fain to remonstrate ; and after some argument, we again assumed amicable relationship by concluding that our second barrels had both been fired at the same bird. At the report of our shots the whole lagoon seemed alive with game. A small mob of greys rose from the opposite end and flew over the hill to the lake, also two lots of black teal, the larger lot following the greys, while the smaller settled in the centre of the lagoon, and in addition a number of red teal and a few moulting greys flew into the cover of the rushes. It was obvious we were not to have another shot, so the only question was how to

retrieve our game, as it would take some time to return to the homestead for old 'Lassie' the retriever, and there was no wind to blow them ashore. Luckily, from my point of view, F——, without any hesitation, volunteered to swim in for them, and though I of course remonstrated, I confess it was in a very feeble manner to what I should have done had he suggested that I should do the deed instead. The black waters, of unknown depth, certainly looked very uninviting. "Anyhow," said he, "I have not had my morning dip; so here goes," and divesting himself of his clothes he took a short run and a header from the bank. He had evidently not anticipated the icy coldness of the water (or so I judged from the yell that burst from his lips as he rose), but he retrieved the birds in good style with a leg of each of them between his teeth. Only one proved to be a grey; the other was a red teal, which, by the way, is really a duck, the black being the only true teal in New Zealand.

A hasty toilet—with an old flannel shirt for a towel—and we returned to the homestead to see about breakfast. As we walked in we vowed to 'do' that lagoon thoroughly some other day; but how we brought the station 'flatty' overland from the lake on the firewood sledge, and how we cruised round that lagoon, with 'Lassie' working among the rushes, is all another story, and has no place here.

The sun was now well up, and Dick was impatient to be away, as the light easterly land-breeze (which can be relied upon in the early morning in

'set-fair' weather) was of some importance to us. The mutton chops were ready, so we did not keep him waiting long. Soon after eight o'clock we were all aboard—Dick with the tiller and sheet, and 'Lassie' curled up beside him in the stern, F—— in the bows on the outlook both for scenery and sport, while I sat amidships, smoking the matutinal pipe and yarning with Dick. A large white-breasted shag sat on a rock at the point of the harbour, and when he thought we were as near as was safe he flapped his wings and sailed away. F—— fired, quite expecting to bring him down, but beyond the merest waggle of his tail to perchance 'acknowledge a hit,' the arch-poacher calmly pursued the even tenor of his way. "That was an eighty-yard shot," said Dick quietly, and the lesson was a useful one, for these distances over water are very deceptive.

It was fully seven miles straight across the lake to the mouth of the middle fiord, and it took us an hour and a half, for the breeze died away to nothing and we had to resort to the oars. Half way across we had a glorious view looking up towards Mount Anau at the head of the lake. "But how much more beautiful the lake would be," said F——, "if there were ibex or chamois or big-horn on those grassy spurs above the bush line, capercailzie in the bush, and salmon in the waters! The only introduced game here seems to be the black swan, and you can't get within shot of them, and they are not fit to eat if you could."

Dick, however, objected that it would spoil the lake to make it too attractive. It was good enough for him as it was. He did not care for a crowd of people about !

Just inside the middle fiord is a cluster of islands—a dozen or more of them, though they are but one on the map. They are of all shapes, heights, and sizes, from a few square yards to many acres in extent. They are covered with mixed bush, and from their steep sides the trees hang right over the water : only here and there are little bays with sometimes a small sandy beach obviously intended by Nature for running a boat ashore. The narrow but deep and winding channels between the islands, some ten yards wide, some a hundred, are still and peaceful, even when the lake outside is rough. Inside this calm retreat, the green transparent waters have

“ quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding o’er the charmed wave.”

The ‘birds of calm’ in this case are not halcyons, but the stately-crested grebe, for this is one of their favourite haunts. As Dick turned the boat’s head in behind the outermost island there was a pair of them not forty yards distant. They dived at once and reappeared, in what seemed but two or three seconds’ time, several hundred yards away.

We now rowed gently along, or rather Dick did, while F—— and I carefully scanned the water for black teal. F—— used a pair of binoculars, and certainly they are a great help for picking up a few

birds close in-shore, more especially in the shadow. It was not long before we sighted a small lot of about half a dozen—probably a family party. They were swimming close under one of the islands, so Dick turned the boat and rowed quietly but quickly, so as to head them off. It was very doubtful whether we could get within range before they rose. F—— was crouching in the bows and I was standing against the mast whispering directions to Dick, when up they got and flew straight away. I did not fire, thinking them out of range, but F—— let them have both barrels at fully sixty yards, and his choke-bore winged one bird, which dropped into the water and dived at once. Dick now pulled his best, for we wanted to get within range by the time it came up. "There he is," shouts F——, as a little black head appears, but it was down again before a shot could be fired, and it was a long time before it rose again; but when it did we were ready for it, for Dick (noticing the direction in which its head was pointing when it dived) had pulled us within five-and-twenty yards of the right spot, and I happened to be looking just in the right direction at the right moment.

We had better fortune with our next mob. There must have been about twenty or thirty in it, and we managed to bag six of them. This, however, took us nearly an hour, for two of the divers were more cunning than usual. They were too hard hit to continue diving and swimming under water, so they simply disappeared. Dick

soon solved the mystery. "They must have gone ashore: we must send 'Lassie.'" So the boat was backed in near some rocks, 'Lassie' was told to jump, and away she went, knowing well what she had to do. The teal would be resting against the rocks at the edge of the shore, but completely under the water, excepting just the tip of their bills. 'Lassie' soon smelt them out, and making a dash at them frightened them back to us, and they were soon secured, one by another shot and the other by 'Lassie,' as it was too 'far through' to take to the water again.

Another little mob contributed a brace to our bag, and then we all, curiously enough about the same time, began to think of lunch. We were still among the islands, so it did not take us long to run the boat ashore on a sunny beach, to light a good fire and put the billy on to boil. The tea was grateful and comforting, and the cold mutton and bread, with a tin of marmalade for a second course, not to be despised. To cut a pipeful of tobacco each and discuss the programme for the afternoon was the next proceeding. We had thought of continuing up the fiord and paying a visit to Lake Hankinson, and certainly the view in that direction was enchanting: the snowy peaks, the bush-clad spurs and deep ravines—

"Hollows of the everlasting hills
Where darkness reigns all day."

We hesitated, but after all it was sport and not scenery that we were wanting, so when Dick

suggested that Pleasant Bay (across the lake, only a few miles below the Station Bay) was a 'sure find' on a fine afternoon with a northerly breeze, we hesitated no longer, but set our faces for the open lake.

Once out of the fiord the light breeze suited us exactly, and we were barely an hour and a half sailing the nine or ten miles to Pleasant Bay. Dick beguiled the way with anecdotes of the Australian natives in the early days, on the upper waters of the Murray. The black-fellow in a state of nature is a very much under-rated man, according to Dick, and his skill in killing wild ducks with his 'throwing sticks' is nothing short of marvellous, while the absence of noise gives him a great advantage over the ordinary civilised white man with his firearms.

We had now arrived at the bay, and, taking a cautious look round the point, were much pleased to see a large assemblage of ducks of some sort at the far end, and only two or three hundred yards away. Our plan of campaign was soon arranged. F—— was to try a careful stalk through the bush round the edge of the bay, while Dick and I remained in the boat just round the point, to be ready for them as they came out. It seemed a long time before we heard a double report from F——'s gun. Almost immediately a mob of greys and another of black teal came past us at a great rate. Dick had, so far, not used his gun all day, but I made him help me on this important occasion. The greys were rather high, but we both took them by preference.

We only secured a brace between us, but we were not much disappointed, for the grey duck dies very hard. We had just retrieved them when F—— came running up to jump on board. It seemed he had made a most successful stalk and had fired 'into the brown,' killing a brace of teal and winging three or four more, which, unless we hurried up with the boat, were bound to escape; and these divers took us quite half an hour to bring to book, and even then F—— was sure we had not got them all.

It was now time to think of returning, and as the breeze had very kindly gone round to the west, it was still useful to us, enabling us to slip up the coast 'close-hauled.' We were glad of this, because it is a sure sign of fine weather in this district when the wind 'follows the sun'; that is to say, when a gentle easterly breeze in the early morning changes to a northerly at mid-day and works round to the west in the afternoon. We had only a small bag, but were quite contented with our day's sport, and little thought that the best of it was yet to come. We had just turned into the Station Bay, and were admiring the after-glow reflected on Mount Eglinton and the 'Countess' range, when a whirr of wings made us raise our guns. We were not quite quick enough, however, this time, but we dropped the sail in an instant and stayed where we were, just inside the point of the harbour. Another small lot of greys came almost immediately right over us, and F—— and I each

dropped one of them. We realised now that they were making for their night camp at the mouth of a creek in the harbour, or else for the lagoon we had visited in the early morning. Little lots of black teal and grey ducks then came alternately at what seemed to us about a thousand miles an hour, and for ten minutes we had the merriest time imaginable. How we longed for a little more daylight! It was want of daylight and not of ducks that made us stop—also the thought as to how we were to retrieve our slain. We managed to pick up eight, and I am positively sure there were half a dozen more somewhere. But it was now almost dark, and the young moon was of no use to us, so reluctantly we pulled in to the jetty. No sooner did we touch the shore than 'Lassie' (who had once or twice with difficulty been restrained from jumping overboard) tore round the edge of the harbour at a great rate. Her sharp eyes had detected two dying birds going ashore while we were shooting, and within the next quarter of an hour she had brought them both in and laid them at Dick's feet. We then helped to hang up our game—twenty-seven head all told—and as we strolled up to the house to see about our evening meal I heartily re-echoed F——'s remark: "It seems a pity we can't stay here three weeks instead of three days."





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